



Beware Photos Containing Malware

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Cyber Criminals Using Photo-Sharing Programs to Compromise Computers

On May 30, 2013, the FBI issued a warning about cyber criminals using online photo-sharing programs to perpetrate scams and harm victims' computers. These criminals advertise vehicles online but do not provide pictures in the advertisement. They send photos on request. Sometimes the photo is a single file sent as an e-mail attachment, and sometimes the victim receives a link to an online photo gallery.

The photos can and often contain malicious software that infects the victim's computer, directing the user to fake websites that look nearly identical to the real sites where the original advertisement was seen. The cyber criminals run all aspects of these fake websites, including "tech support" or "live chat support" and any "recommended" payment-escrow services. After the victim agrees to purchase the item and makes the payment, the criminals stop responding to correspondence. The victims never receive any merchandise.

Protect Yourself

The FBI urges consumers to protect themselves when shopping online. Here are a few tips for staying safe:

- Be cautious if you lose an auction on an auction site but the seller contacts you later saying the original bidder fell through.
- Make sure websites are secure and authenticated before you purchase an item online. Use only well-known escrow services.
- Research to determine if a car dealership is real and how long it has been in business. Look for dealerships that have "brick-and-mortar" buildings.
- Be wary if the price for the item you'd like to buy is severely undervalued. If it is, the item is likely fraudulent.
- Scan files for viruses before downloading them to your computer.
- Keep your computer software, including the operating system and browser, updated with the latest patches.
- Ensure your anti-virus software and firewalls are current — they can help prevent malware infections.
- If you have fallen victim to this type of scam, file a complaint with the Internet Crime Complaint Center at www.ic3.gov.