

# Online Safety Tips

## Protect Family And Friends From Potentially Harmful Situations

(NAPSA)—With purse strings tightened, consumers are trying to find great deals or make a few extra dollars selling items no longer being used. This has led some consumers to online classifieds; unfortunately, it's a choice that has not gone unnoticed by those who want to take advantage of the people using them. Con artists, otherwise known as scammers, have become more widespread and creative in how they use online listings as a tool to target potential victims.

According to the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3), more than 259,000 online fraud and scam complaints have been filed in 2008. This number likely represents a small percentage of the problem, as most individuals who are victims of online crime never report the crime. The best way to protect yourself is to report suspicious online listings and behavior to law enforcement or the Internet Crime Complaint Center.

"For the most part, using online classifieds is perfectly safe, I'm sure, because most people want to do right by their neighbors and local communities," said Anne Collier of ConnectSafely.org. "But mindful use of the Net is always a good idea and buyers should be alert as more and more scammers try to take advantage of consumers in this tight economy."

While many sites, such as Oodle, are using the latest technology in combination with human moderators to prevent any

**Learning about how to stay safe online only takes a few minutes, but can save years of financial, emotional and physical recovery following a scam. It only takes one scam to ruin a life.**



potential wrongdoing, there still exist sites in which fraudulent listings essentially go unnoticed by everyone except the victims.

As part of its consumer advocacy efforts, Oodle recently published an online classifieds safety guide to protect both buyers and sellers against potentially harmful situations. A few simple safety steps include:

- Always meet the seller in a public place—and avoid making an in-person transaction alone.
- Inspect all items before you buy.
- Beware of underpriced offers—if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Don't wire money or take advance payments.
- Insist on cash—never use money wires, MoneyGrams or Western Union.
- Never give out personal identifiable information, such as your credit card numbers, Social Security numbers or bank numbers.
- Only pay for shipping if you know the seller.

To see the entire guide, visit [http://safety.oodle.com/files/Oodle\\_Safety\\_Brochure.pdf](http://safety.oodle.com/files/Oodle_Safety_Brochure.pdf).