

West Virginia Executive Branch  
Privacy Tip of the Week

Holiday Giving (and Taking!)

Most of us look forward to the Holidays, often getting to visit with family and friends we haven't seen for a while. Many times we feel more generous during the Holidays too, buying gifts for those we love as well as for those who are less fortunate. Because of our generosity, it's a perfect time for scam artists to use their wiles to try and take advantage of us. If you happen to fall for one of these "scams", you might lose your personal information, financial data, and even your good credit reputation.

Let's look at a tip to help prevent being "taken" during this season of giving:

Say "No" to fake charity scams!

Giving to your local charities is one thing, but did you know that cybercriminals also take advantage of our generosity? They send e-mails that look totally legitimate, soliciting donations for one cause or another. The process is called "Phishing" and scams such as these are often accompanied by fake websites designed to gain access to your personal data and your identity. These hackers could pose as you on the Web and potentially destroy your online reputation.

- ✓ Report phishing attempts to the legitimate institution that is being impersonated. Most companies have instructions on their real website about how you can report phishing, masquerading, and other security concerns.
- ✓ If you've been scammed, visit the Federal Trade Commission's Identity Theft website at <http://www.ftc.gov/idtheft> for more information.
- ✓ To learn more, visit the Anti-Phishing Working Group: <http://www.antiphishing.org/>.

To avoid being "taken" always do your homework, researching the charitable organization, before giving!