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Ohio Department of Commerce Wants to Help Ohioans Protect What Matters Most

Tips to stay safe during National Consumer Protection Week

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) - The Ohio Department of Commerce wants to raise awareness about all the ways Ohioans can protect what's most important – their families, their homes, and their money – during [National Consumer Protection Week](#) (March 1-7).

The awareness week is all about helping people make well-informed decisions – so here are some tips from the Department of Commerce on how best to stay safe.

Protect Your Home and Family

- **Buying a Home:** Deciding on a home is arguably one of the biggest purchases a person will make in their life – don't leave that decision in the hands of the wrong person! Make sure your real estate professional is licensed by calling the Division of Real Estate & Professional Licensing at 614-466-4100 or visiting com.ohio.gov/real.
- **Renovating Your Home:** Before you begin any project on your home, it's best to consult your local building or zoning department to obtain any necessary approvals. While residential contractors are not licensed by Commerce, some commercial contractors are, and can be a reliable resource for certain work on your home.
- **Purchasing Liquor:** The only authorized places to purchase high-proof spirits in Ohio are the 485 Ohio Liquor stores. If you purchase from another source, you don't know what you may be buying. It could be counterfeit product, but it could also be tampered with and pose a risk to your health. Check for a list of licensed stores at OHLQ.com.
- **Fire Safety:** Don't scam yourself! Having working smoke alarms can not only save you thousands of dollars in potential damage – but it can save your life! Find more information about fire safety at com.ohio.gov/fire.

Protect Your Money

- **Investing:** No reputable investment professional should push you to make an immediate decision about an investment or tell you that you have to act now. If someone pressures you to decide on a stock sale or purchase, steer clear and call the Division of Securities' Investor Protection Hotline at 877-683-7841 to see if the investor is licensed.

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- **Money Transmitting:** If you receive a check in the mail, make sure the source is legitimate before cashing.
- **Unclaimed Funds:** Oftentimes, funds belonging to you as part of deposits, bank accounts, and insurance policies don't always find their way back to you, and the state safeguards this money until it is returned. If a business claims you must pay a fee before the funds are returned to you – call the Division of Unclaimed Funds to ensure the individual is registered and authorized to assist with the recovery of funds for a fee. The most reliable (and free) source to find and claim your missing money is at missingmoney.com.

For more information and tips for protecting yourself and your family, visit com.ohio.gov.

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