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Bargain Hunters Beware: That Good Deal May Be Stolen

Las Vegas – The Nevada Fight Fraud Taskforce is warning shoppers to be careful when buying goods at flea markets or swap meets.

As the economy worsens, more people turn to crime. More people also turn to bargain hunting, trying to save money any way they can. When the two meet at the flea market, it can be a recipe for fraud.

Flea markets and swap meets are great places to find a good deal, but they are also an avenue for burglars to get rid of stolen property. Stolen items have been recovered from people who unknowingly bought them at these markets. Most of the vendors are legitimate, but shoppers need to be aware that some vendors may be attempting to move stolen goods under the guise of selling unneeded or unwanted items.

“If someone is offering you an unbelievably good deal, question it,” said Elisabeth Shurtleff, Chairperson of the Taskforce. *“One person’s trash can be another person’s treasure, but you should still question what you’re buying.”*

Another important tip is to ask for a receipt. If the vendor is operating ethically, they will not hesitate to provide a receipt for the sale.

Also, look for merchant tags or stickers. Some crooks don't bother to remove them. If they are still on the merchandise, it's almost always stolen.

Vendors and buyers both should also be cautious of people who offer to trade items, because those goods could very well be stolen.

If you suspect that a flea market or swap meet vendor is selling stolen items, report it to the Property Crimes division of local law enforcement.

The statewide Fight Fraud Taskforce includes members from the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and other local law enforcement agencies, the Better Business Bureau, the Federal Trade Commission, the I.R.S., the Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection, the Department of Justice, U.S.P.S., county representatives and experts from the private sector, including a minority community specialist and a check fraud/anti-money laundering expert.

The Taskforce ensures that the latest fraud information is available on the Fight Fraud website: <http://fightfraud.nv.gov>. Consumers are encouraged to visit the site, which includes extensive tips on how to prevent fraud and provides downloadable complaint forms to help you respond effectively if you become a victim. Visit it regularly for the latest fraud alerts.

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