Get Help Fighting Fraud Online

Government agencies offer consumers assistance online. Learn how to fight back aga

By Jack Karp May 7, 2002

Ever been scammed or conned on the Internet and felt like you had no place to turn? This week on "CyberCrime" we show you how to take action if you ever get ripped off online.

The Internet Fraud Complaint Center (IFCC) http://www1.ifccfbi.gov/index.asp was set up specifically to deal with complaints about online fraud and to provide victims with resources for protecting themselves.

"We're seeing anything from auction frauds to non-deliverable goods to credit card fraud to identity theft [to] non-payment of services," IFCC program manager Bob Pocica told "CyberCrime." "So, it's really kind of a broad spectrum of different complaints."

The center has been online since May 2000, when the FBI and the National White Collar Crime Center launched it. Since then, the IFCC site has averaged about 1,000 complaints each week.

The IFCC isn't the only resource where people victimized on the Internet can turn. Here's a list of other such resources and how they can help:

- The National White Collar Crime Center http://www.nw3c.org/ is a nationwide network that forwards fraud complaints received by the IFCC to state and local law enforcement agencies. It also provides a variety of other support services to law enforcement involved with investigating high tech crime.
- The National Infrastructure Protection Center http://www.nipc.gov/ is part of the FBI and serves as a government center for investigating threats and providing warnings regarding attacks against the United States' critical infrastructures, including telecommunications, energy, banking, water systems, government operations, and emergency services.
- The Better Business Bureau http://www.bbb.org/ is a nationwide non-profit organization that polices companies and businesses to ensure that consumers aren't taken advantage of. At the BBB's website, you can file a complaint about a company, see a company's BBB rating, and read consumer safety tips.
- The National Fraud Information Center http://www.fraud.org/ is the only nationwide toll-free hotline offering consumers advice and the chance to report telemarketing and Internet fraud to law enforcement agencies. Consumers can call the hotline toll-free at 1.800.876.7060 or can contact the organization via its website.
- The Federal Trade Commission http://www.ftc.gov/ is the government office that enforces consumer protection laws. The FTC website provides advice and news about privacy, identity theft, e-commerce, Internet fraud, and telemarketing. You can also file a complaint online.
- The Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/cybercrime/compcrime.html of the Department of Justice website provides updates about statutes and laws regarding computer crime, news about computer crime cases currently in the courts, and guidance to prosecutors and law enforcement agents working on high tech crime investigations.
- The FBI http://www.fbi.gov/ is the government's main law enforcement agency and has several offices devoted to the investigation of high tech crime.
- And, as always, you can visit CyberCrime.com http://www.techtv.com/cybercrime/for

the latest news, information, and updates about high tech crime, privacy, hacking, and security.

This article is based on original reporting by "CyberCrime" freelance segment producer Lisa Huffman.