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## **5 Tips For Safe Online Shopping**

**By Sharon Gaudin**

As consumers increasingly check items off their holiday shopping lists via online shopping, experts are alert to the steps they can take to keep themselves -- and their bank accounts -- safe.

Richard Rushing, chief security officer of AirDefense Inc., a wireless security company based in Alpharetta, Ga., said with companies like Circuit City getting better and better at keeping their online customers safe, more people are growing confident about shopping on the Net. However, it always pays to be safe.

Here are Rushing's tips to safe online shopping:

Never ever go to a site by clicking on a link in an email. "That's probably the number one thing," said Rushing. "We'll see more fraudulent spam this year than ever before." He added that people should watch out for spam that appears to be from legitimate stores, like BestBuy, advertising incredibly low prices. Don't be lured in. Don't click on the link;

Before you submit your credit card information, make sure the transaction is encrypted;

Where are you doing your online shopping? From home? From work? Rushing warns that people should avoid shopping online at their local Starbucks or public library? "When you're dealing with a public wireless connection, it's unsecured and that makes it easier to do lots of really bad things, like stealing your user name, home address and credit card information," he added;

Don't skip over those pop-ups. You may see a pop-up and just click 'ok'. Don't. It could be redirecting you to another web site or it could be asking you for your permission to load an ActiveX control or to send you all the email they want in the future;

Be aware of where you're shopping. Have you been to this site before? Have you shopped at its brick-and-mortar counterpart? Be more careful on sites that you and your friends (your smart friends) have never been to or heard of. If you find yourself on a mystery site eyeing a great pair of boots or that smart phone you know your sweetie has been wanting, be extra careful. Check out any site before you enter your personal or financial information.