**Online Shopping Safety Tips**

The number one concern about shopping online is security. The truth is, shopping online is safe and secure if you know what to look for. Following these guidelines should help you avoid trouble.

**Only buy at secure sites.** Secure sites use encryption to scramble your credit card information so that no one except the site can read it. When you enter a secure site, you’ll get a pop-up notice in your browser, and then an icon of a closed lock will appear at the bottom of the browser.

**Find out the privacy policy of shopping sites before you buy.** Ask what information they gather, how that information will be used, and whether they share that information.

**Never provide your social security number.** A legitimate site will not ask you for your social security number.

**Look for sites that follow privacy rules from a privacy watchdog such as TRUSTe.** TRUSTe (www.truste.org) is a nonprofit group that serves as a watchdog for Internet privacy. It allows sites to post an online seal if the site adheres to TRUSTe’s Internet privacy policies.

**Keep current with the latest Internet scams.** The U.S. Consumer Gateway reports on Internet scams and tells you what actions the Federal Trade Commission has taken against Internet scammers. The Internet Fraud Watch, run by the National Consumers League, is a great source as well.