

Business Owners Should Be On Guard This Holiday Season or Scammers Seeking to Steal Data, Records and More

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ATLANTA – November 30, 2009 – The holidays provide extra opportunities for criminals to dupe businesses into turning over passwords and other sensitive information. This holiday season is no different and AutoTrader.com has sent a video and fraud prevention message to the auto dealers working with AutoTrader.com to remind them of the company's business-to-business communications policies.

In a typical scam, a business receives an email that appears to be from one of its vendors or suppliers asking the business owner or manager to click on a link. The link in the email takes the business owner or manager to a web site that looks remarkably similar to their actual vendor's site, where the owner or manager is presented screens to "confirm" the information the criminal is seeking to obtain – typically user names and passwords for the vendor they are posing as. With that information, the criminal has access to whatever data the business has stored with that vendor. In this day of high-tech, off-site data storage, that could include employee payroll records, customer credit card numbers, inventory management information and more. And when the criminals get hold of this information, they can wreak financial havoc on the business, the business's employees and the business's customers.

"Scammers target the holidays because they believe that retail businesses like car dealerships and stores will be swamped with customers and will have their guard down," said AutoTrader.com Director of Fraud Prevention Strategies Keely Funkhouser. "The fraudulent emails claim that failure to 'confirm' the information they're asking for will result in some crucial system shutting down. A business owner or manager faced with a rush of holiday shoppers may worry that any system downtime could impact their sales and they respond to this kind of email without thinking. At the same time, scammers hope that the vendors storing client data will be operating with skeleton crews during the holidays and won't notice odd activity on their clients' accounts."

AutoTrader.com's fraud prevention video, distributed to its dealer customers via email, notes:

- AutoTrader.com never asks dealer customers to confirm sensitive information via email,
- Dealers looking to access their accounts with AutoTrader.com should always do so by typing, pasting or pulling from a "favorites" or bookmarked list the appropriate URL into their browser,
- If an AutoTrader.com dealer customer receives an email that appears to be from AutoTrader.com with a link to a site that requests such account information, call AutoTrader.com's Dealer Support team at 1-800-353-9350.

In addition to delivering the video message directly to dealers, AutoTrader.com has also posted the video on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkcy9mhC1r0>) and promoted it via the company's Facebook fan page and Twitter feed.

"Because scammers use the holidays hoping to catch business people on the run with their guards down, it's a good idea for all businesses to refresh their employees about their major vendor's communication policies," said Funkhouser. "Dealers working with AutoTrader.com can use these tips to help protect the information they've stored at AutoTrader.com and information they've stored at other vendors and suppliers. A healthy dose of skepticism, a little information and taking a moment to think before responding to these kinds of emails can save a business and their customers a great deal of hardship."

This business-to-business fraud message coincides with a major consumer fraud awareness campaign AutoTrader.com has been running with the aim of educating consumers about safe shopping on-line.

"More and more shoppers are going on line to shop for cars, books, clothes and just about anything else you can think of," said Funkhouser. "And as a result, more and more criminals are finding ways to trick shoppers into giving up money or important personal information. As one of the largest on-line automotive shopping sites, we want to make sure consumers know what to look for when shopping on line so that they can have a safe and productive experience."

AutoTrader.com has a wealth of on-line safe shopping information on its site at www.autotrader.com/fraudtips.

About AutoTrader.com

AutoTrader.com, created in 1997 and headquartered in Atlanta, Ga., is the Internet's leading auto classifieds marketplace and consumer information website. AutoTrader.com aggregates in a single location millions of [new cars](#), [used cars](#) and [certified pre-owned cars](#) from thousands of auto dealers and private owners. The site attracts about 15 million unique monthly visitors. Through innovative merchandising functionality such as multiple photos, videos, detailed descriptions and comprehensive research and compare tools, AutoTrader.com unites new and used car buyers and sellers online to improving the way people research, locate and advertise vehicles. AutoTrader.com is a majority-owned subsidiary of Cox Enterprises. The venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers is also an investor. For more information, please visit www.autotrader.com.

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