

## Better Business Bureau Tips for using Craigslist Consumers urged to be cautious

Written by

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In the wake of another tragic death in the Twin Cities area involving a transaction initiated through Craigslist, the Better Business Bureau of Minnesota and North Dakota (BBB) is advising the public to practice caution when using the online service and others like it.

“There are certainly deals to be found online, but it’s good for both buyers and sellers to remember they’re usually dealing with people unfamiliar to them,” said Dana Badgerow, president and CEO of the BBB. “There are risks involved and we feel it’s very important that people take the time to pause and consider both their personal and financial security.”

Here are some basic tips from the BBB in regard to using sites like Craigslist:

Try to deal with local buyers and sellers.

Never wire funds.

Use caution when using an escrow service – make sure it’s reputable by checking them out at [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org).

Never give out your Social Security or personal financial information.

Don’t apply for jobs that require a payment.

Apartment or home rentals should be thoroughly checked out and inspected in person before money is put down.

Consider the risks involved with selling a high value item yourself and weigh that against any extra profit you might make. Is it worth it?

The following are red flags, signs you’re likely dealing with someone using Craigslist to defraud people:

The buyer or seller is from another country.

The buyer or seller will not meet with you and will only communicate via e-mail.

The buyer overpays and asks you to wire the extra funds back to him/her.

The riskiest part of buying or selling something through Craigslist (or other online e-commerce sites) is the meeting to complete the transaction. Here are some tips to ensure your transaction goes safely and smoothly:

Set up meetings during daytime hours and in a public place (coffee shop, restaurant).

Consider bringing a friend or family member with you if you have safety concerns.

If you’re the seller, consider using an escrow service.

If you’re buying an item, don’t pay with cash if the item is more than one hundred dollars; pay with a cashier’s check and let the seller know in advance you’re paying with a cashier’s check.

If the seller insists you come to their home or apartment, tell them you will only meet at a neutral public site.

Trust your instincts. If you don’t like the direction things are taking, walk away.

As in life, most of the people you deal with when buying or selling household goods on sites like Craigslist are honest. However, there are those who see these sites as an opportunity to commit crimes. The BBB advises everyone who uses websites like these to make sure they’re doing everything they can to protect themselves.

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*The mission of the Better Business Bureau is to promote, through self-regulation, the highest standards of business ethics and conduct; and to instill public confidence in responsible businesses through programs of education and action that inform, protect and assist the general public. Our hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Contact the BBB at [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org) or 651-699-1111, toll-free at 1-800-646-6222.*