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Fraud protection specialist issues Christmas card warning

A company that specialises in protecting retailers and consumers from credit card crime has issued a warning to those concerned about the security of shopping over the Internet: "Don't listen to the scaremongers!" With online shopping over the festive period set to hit £3 billion, The 3rd Man is asking the retail industry to put Internet card crime into perspective and highlight the fact that most retailers have secure sites which cannot easily be compromised.

Not a day goes by without stories of identity theft, 'phishing', dustbin raiding, cybercrime and even personal assault at the ATM machine. But these all take place away from Internet shopping and should be regarded as separate altogether.

Last month APACS, the UK payments association, issued predictions showing that a total of £51.6 billion is expected to be spent during December, an increase of 6.6 per cent on the December 2005 figure of £48.4 billion. Of this figure, credit cards will continue to dominate in the online arena, making up 67 per cent of the expected £3 billion total of plastic card spend online at £2 billion.

Paul Simms, CEO of The 3rd Man whose clients include JJB Sports, Halfords and Ticketmaster, said: "Every day there is a story about fraudsters cheating their way into our pockets. The introduction of Chip and PIN has made a massive impact on fraud, reducing crime in stores. It has also persuaded many fraudsters to target 'card not present' environments such as Internet shopping, but equally many retailers have recognised this and put in place proper systems to combat the criminals. If people wish to shop on the Internet they should be confident that it is fundamentally safe. It is the safest way to shop!"

The 3rd Man has some advice for consumers.

Make sure that the Internet retailer is reputable, either because they are a known brand or by easily checking out the retailers credentials based upon the address of their offices. Any potentially disreputable retailer will struggle to gain a licence to

accept credit cards because the banks will have run many checks on them. If they accept credit cards then the bank already offers you massive protection in shopping with them.

Also, check for the 'secure' padlock symbol in the corner of the browser which means that data cannot be easily intercepted over the Internet.

Most retailers, and certainly the reputable ones, will have screening services in place, checking millions of transactions for abnormal spending patterns. For example, if your card is used by a fraudster, unless the fraudster uses all of your details, including your name, email and phone number and also asks for delivery to your address, then this will be picked up and investigated immediately.

Simms adds: "Most retailers protect their businesses and keep their customers safe. If they don't then you shouldn't shop with them. Where a card is used fraudulently, instead of blaming the banks we should be asking why it wasn't spotted sooner."

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About The 3rd Man - www.the3rdman.co.uk

The 3rd Man provides card not present fraud screening, card fraud analysis and consultancy services to some of the UK's leading retailers, including JJB Sports, Halfords and Ticketmaster.

The company reliably detects in excess of 95% of fraudulent attempts including organised and casual fraud.

The 3rd Man also provides its GateKeeper secure online data reporting and analysis tool that enables clients to search for and display transactional information instantly, performing complex analysis to identify fraud rings quickly.

Press contact

Glen Goldsmith
2thefore
Tel: 01403 254242 / 07812 766338
Email: glen@2thefore.biz

Paul Simms
CEO
The 3rd Man
Tel: 07785 517776
Email: psimms@the3rdman.co.uk