



## Better Business Bureau® Senior Awareness Initiative

### FBI Releases Warning About "Juice Jacking"

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) [recently tweeted a statement](#) advising consumers to avoid using public charging stations commonly found in airports, hotels, and shopping malls. When consumers plug into these USB-based charging stations, hackers and scammers can potentially access their cellphone data, including sensitive information such as passwords, images, and location data.

Bad actors may load malware onto public USB charging stations or cables. The practice is commonly referred to as "juice jacking." Consumers may not immediately realize they have become a victim of this attack. Previously, in October 2021, the [Federal Communications Commission issued an advisory](#) stating that "in some cases, criminals may have intentionally left cables plugged in at charging stations. There have even been reports of infected cables being given away as promotional gifts."

Better Business Bureau Serving Greater Cleveland is advising consumers to be aware of the risks that come with using public devices, cords, and charging stations. This is especially important to remember when planning vacations and traveling for work. Plan ahead, bring external batteries, and be wary of using external chargers even if it seems to be enticing when waiting for a layover.

#### **Additionally, use the following tips to avoid being a victim of juice-jacking:**

- Avoid plugging your device into USB public charging stations
- Bring your own USB outlet and cable to plug directly into an AC power outlet
- Use a portal charger or external battery
- Use a charge-only cable with a USB data blocker that prohibits data transfers while charging
- If you plug your device into a USB port and a prompt appears asking you to select "share data" or "charge only," always select "charge only."
- Make sure your phone's firmware is up-to-date

**Have additional questions?** Reach out to your BBB at **216.241.7678** or [mybbb@cleveland.bbb.org](mailto:mybbb@cleveland.bbb.org). **Have a scam to report?** Report it to [BBB.org/ScamTracker](https://www.bbb.org/ScamTracker)



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### Consumers Can Find Trouble in Paradise with Timeshare Sales

Timeshares and vacation clubs are often synonymous with high-pressure sales. With the sun out and their guard down, vacationers can quickly find themselves on the hook for a life-long commitment. And, while they're easy to get into, these contracts are incredibly difficult to escape.

BBB has monitored [deception in the timeshare industry](#) and [warned consumers about timeshare exit companies](#) for nearly half a decade. However, skilled sellers continue to con buyers into unfavorable deals that often worsen when desperate investors offload purchases through the timeshare exit industry. Even worse, some of the victims of this industry live locally. Last year, a North Ridgeville woman reported to BBB about her experience with a timeshare exit company. She called a company named [Timeshare Freedom Group](#) who promised an exit to her Diamond Resort Timeshare. The consumer told BBB that "they required money upfront. It was \$4,898 and they (said they) would cancel my contract within 12 months or less. They have disconnected all phones I have for them and emails return back as undeliverable." Timeshare Freedom Group did not answer the woman's complaint and has an "F" rating from BBB due to failure to respond to over 190 consumer complaints.

#### **BBB is providing the following tips for anyone considering a timeshare or exit company:**

- **Start with Trust** - Use BBB.org to extensively research timeshare properties, vacation clubs, or exit companies and thoroughly read contracts for language about lifetime commitment, heirs' obligations, maintenance fee increases, or guarantees.
- **Beware of misleading or high-pressure sales tactics** - If you feel like someone is trying to push you into a deal, walk away.
- **Contact the property management directly** - To sell a timeshare, contact the resort directly and see if they have a resale or buyback program.
- **Be realistic about what you can get for your timeshare** - Most of these contracts are not investments and may return considerably less than you paid.
- **If it sounds too good to be true, it is** - There are deals to be found on travel, but scammers know consumers want to save money and take advantage.
- **Delay paying in full** - Be wary of paying timeshare exit companies all fees upfront until services are rendered.

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### Don't Make a "Pour" Decision by Taking a Shot on an Online Alcohol Purchase

Better Business Bureau Serving Greater Cleveland® (BBB®) is warning consumers about the growing number of scams associated with online alcohol-related purchases. Last year, an elderly Richmond Heights man lost over \$300,000 in a [rare wine and whiskey investment scheme](#). In the past year, there were also reports of illegal [pyramid schemes targeting wine aficionados](#) as well as consumers being sold [diluted or counterfeit whiskey](#). Now, a Chagrin Falls man recently contacted BBB after realizing he was scammed after attempting to purchase bourbon online.

The consumer told BBB that he attempted to purchase a bottle of Weller 12-year bourbon that normally retails for \$250 for \$100 from a website called "Whiskeys and Bourbons" (<http://www.whiskeysandbourbons.com>). "I purchased a bottle of liquor for delivery and the company said they shipped the product." However, the consumer soon realized that the scammer had also created a "fake shipping company" to perpetrate the fraud. This fake shipping company repeatedly asked for additional funds to cover shipping, insurance, and breakage costs. The consumer soon realized he had been scammed after the multiple requests for money and contacted BBB.

BBB is providing the following tips for consumers to help verify the legitimacy of any online store before making an alcohol-related purchase:

- **Start with Trust** - Research the company with [BBB.org](http://BBB.org) before purchasing. Use a search engine service such as Google to see if there are any complaints alleging that it's a scam.
- **Research the Products** - Consumers should always research the beverages they intend to buy, including their price, packaging, and labeling. A price that seems "too good to be true" is a red flag.
- **Consider the Source** - Be wary of unsolicited offers or advertisements for alcohol products. Scammers often use email or social media to promote fraudulent products or sales.
- **Look for Red Flags** - Legitimate online retailers may ask consumers for a copy of a government-issued ID to prove the recipient is of legal age to purchase alcohol when they place an order or require an ID to be shown when the common carrier delivers the order. Be wary of any website that does not mention or ask for this.
- **Use a Credit Card When Possible** - Use a credit card when paying for an online purchase. Other methods, such as Zelle, CashApp, and Apple Pay, don't provide the same consumer protections as credit cards. It is also a red flag if an online retailer only accepts peer-to-peer payment methods.

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