



Better Business Bureau® Senior Awareness Initiative Scams Taking a “Toll” on Turnpike Users

Consumers have contacted Better Business Bureau® (BBB®) [Serving Greater Cleveland](#) with concerns about text messages from scammers looking to capitalize on Ohio’s recent changes to its toll collection system. Ohio’s toll collection system, [E-ZPass](#), started allowing consumers with transponders to continue traveling through toll lanes without stopping. As a result, scammers began sending mass text messages about fake unpaid tolls to area residents.

Since the E-ZPass system is used by some other neighboring states such as Pennsylvania and Illinois, the [FBI released a statement on April 12th](#) that stated: “Since early March 2024, the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center has received over 2,000 complaints reporting smishing texts representing road toll collection service.” They also warned that the scam may be moving from state to state. Soon after, on April 22, the [Ohio Turnpike Commission issued a notice](#) about this scam that stated “Ohio Turnpike E-ZPass does not request payments by text. Collections of unpaid toll and/or toll violations do not occur by text.” Additionally, the Ohio Turnpike Commission noted “The only website links associated with Ohio Turnpike E-ZPass are [www.ezpassoh.com](#) and [www.ohioturnpike.org](#).”

BBB Serving Greater Cleveland is providing these tips for consumers who are looking to avoid text message phishing scams.

- **Verify your outstanding toll balance with the legitimate agency.** Instead of clicking on the link in the text message, go to your web browser, find the toll service’s actual website, and log in to your account to verify if you have any outstanding toll payments.
- **Know the warning signs of a fake text.** If you receive an unusual text message, there are several things to look for to help you identify if it’s fake. Read BBB’s tips on [spotting the red flags of fake text messages](#).
- **Don’t click on links or download files that are unexpectedly texted to you.** It may be hard to [identify if a link sent in a text message is safe](#). Scammers can disguise a URL to appear legitimate when it isn’t.
- **If you receive a text message impersonating a road toll collection service, report it.** You can file a report with [BBB Scam Tracker](#) to help warn others about this new scam. In addition, file a report with the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) at [ic3.gov](#).

For more information, visit [BBB.org](#). BBB recommends individuals report scams, regardless of whether or not they have lost money, to [BBB.org/ScamTracker](#). These reports can help others avoid falling victim to fraud.



Better Business Bureau® Senior Awareness Initiative Introducing BBB's New Travel HQ

Vacations are a time for relaxation, but planning a trip can be a stressful process. No matter where or when consumers are traveling, Better Business Bureau's® (BBB®) new [Travel HQ](#) is here to help them plan their next vacation. Here, consumers can receive tips on planning the perfect getaway, spotting the top five travel scams, and resources for what to do when something goes wrong while

traveling.

BBB's Travel HQ has information and tips on booking websites, cruises, air travel, and finding a good travel agent. Consumers can also obtain advice on travel insurance, pet boarding, and RV rentals. BBB created this site to help eliminate stress, unforeseen costs, and potential risks.

BBB Serving Greater Cleveland is also providing the following tips to help ensure an enjoyable vacation:

- **Start with BBB.** Research companies, such as hotels and travel agencies, on [BBB.org](#). On BBB.org, customers can read reviews and view complaint details.
- **Avoid broad internet searches.** Entering phrases like 'best deals' into a search engine can sometimes bring up websites that look official, but are not. Also, double-check web addresses to ensure you are using secure and official websites.
- **Be alert for travel scams.** Watch out for phone calls or letters touting a 'free trip' or websites offering prices that appear too good to be true. [Learn more about travel scams here.](#)
- **Get trip details in writing.** Before making a final payment, get all the details of the trip in writing. This should include the total cost, restrictions, cancellation penalties, and names of the airlines, hotels, booking sites, and travel agents. Information like this will help if a trip is canceled or one of the carriers experiences a delay.
- **Check Delays** - Consumers can check flight status on carriers' websites or through their telephone reservation systems. If an airline causes a substantial delay or cancellation, consumers should read their carrier's terms and conditions to see what compensation, if any, they are entitled to.
- **Pay with a credit card.** Paying with a credit card provides additional protection if something goes wrong with the travel reservation.
- **Planning to travel internationally?** Check to see if there are any [advisories affecting travel from the Department of State](#).

Visit BBB's Travel HQ at [BBB.org/travel](#). See BBB's article for advice on [planning your next vacation](#). Also, check out [BBB's tips for protecting your personal information when traveling](#). Consumers can learn more about [travel insurance](#) and find advice in locating a [travel agent](#) at BBB.org. Consumers who have experienced a flight delay or cancellation should also visit BBB to read [tips on handling travel delays](#).

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Better Business Bureau® Senior Awareness Initiative

Consumers Heated Up Over Stovetop Accessory Orders

A locally-based company specializing in stovetop accessories has generated complaints from consumers nationwide. [Stove Guard](#) is headquartered in Seven Hills and sells stovetop protection mats. Buyers have informed BBB that the products failed to meet their expectations. Most complaints concern dissatisfaction that the product did not fit the stovetop properly and difficulty receiving refunds. Some consumers have alleged the “heat resistant” mats have failed and melted under normal use. The company has been unresponsive to recent complaints from numerous consumers.

Stove Guard's BBB rating is currently an “F” due to a high volume of complaints, with many remaining unanswered or unresolved. Stove Guard has received 87 complaints in the last three years with 34 complaints not receiving a response from the company. Most complaints concern delays in delivery and refund issues for ill-fitting mats. On February 1, 2024, BBB submitted a written request to the company encouraging them to address the company's pattern of complaints. Stove Guard responded to BBB's letter. They stated business tripled in sales this past year and they are experiencing difficulties responding to the volume. Stove Guard stated they are implementing AI responders to their website to send quick, short answers to their consumers for general questions. They hope these, along with several other changes, will help with their overall caseload and potential complaint reduction. However, Stove Guard has not responded to any of their BBB complaints since that correspondence and BBB has not seen a reduction in complaint volume. Additionally, BBB requested Stove Guard substantiate claims on their website that state “America's #1 stovetop protectors” and “rated 4.8/5 from 37,536 customer reviews.” As of May 14th, BBB has not received a response.

BBB Serving Greater Cleveland (BBB) is providing the following tips for consumers to consider when shopping online and in-store.

- **Look for the BBB Seal.** If a business has a BBB Accreditation, it shows consumers that the business prioritizes trust in the marketplace and adds a layer of confidence and peace of mind for all consumers. When shopping online, look for the BBB Seal, the [Sign of a](#)
- **Think before you click.** Be especially cautious about email solicitations and online ads on social media sites. Many sketchy retailers advertise great deals or trendy clothing that doesn't match the promotional hype.
- **Shop with a credit card.** A credit card provides additional protection against unauthorized charges or problematic purchases. In most cases, debit cards, prepaid cards, payment apps, or gift cards don't have this same protection.

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

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