

# Police investigate online surgical mask scam

Since late January this year, there have been scammers making fraudulent claims through online shopping platforms that they have surgical masks for sale, taking advantage of the tight supply of surgical masks in the society. After making pre-payments, the victims would lose contact with the scammers. As at February 5, Police have received 109 relevant reports, totaling a monetary loss of about \$580,000. Six men and two women were arrested for obtaining properties by deception.

Police accord high priority to such online shopping scam. The Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau is co-ordinating various Police Districts in devising the strategies to tackle the situation, such as enhancing intelligence gathering and cyber patrol, etc. Police will timely take law enforcement action should the evidence warrant. Active investigations are underway and further arrests are likely.

Members of the public who believe they have fallen victim to such scam should make a report to Police as soon as possible. To facilitate Police investigation, they should also provide the following information when reporting their cases:

- Details of the online sales platform (including the URL);
- Details of the scammer's social media account (including the UID and URL);
- Contact details provided by the scammer (including telephone number and email address);
- Details of the transaction tool provided by the scammer (including bank account, the stored value facilities used, the receipt and the QR Code used to collect payment);
- Details of any face-to-face interaction with the scammer, including date, time and location.

Police remind the public to be vigilant when conducting online transactions and pay attention to the following points:

- Find out more about the other party's credibility and verify their identity before conducting online transactions;
- Conduct transactions through an online trading system with identity authentication to reduce the chance of being swindled;
- Both sellers and buyers should check and consider the other party's transaction history, credibility rating and transaction comments before proceeding with the transaction;
- Conduct transactions through trusted intermediary platforms;
- When shopping online, both parties should meet in person to conduct the transaction. Check the goods carefully before paying;

- If there is any doubt about the identity of the other party, stop the transaction at once, call the Anti-Scam Helpline 18222 or report to Police.