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## Who We Are

Attorney General  
Tom Miller  
Office Directory

## What We Do

Protecting Consumers  
Fighting Crime  
Helping Victims of  
Crime  
Working for Farmers  
Protecting the  
Environment  
Raising Child Support  
Awareness  
Representing State  
Government  
Issuing Attorney  
General Opinions  
Enforcing Tobacco Laws  
Protecting Utility  
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## Consumer Advisory Bulletin-June 2003

**Internet Auctions: "Going, Going, Gone!"**

Internet auction sales involve billions of dollars every year and are growing fast. Online auctions are one of the hottest things going on the Web, with an endless range of merchandise available at any time of day from just about anywhere on Earth.

But some consumers are harmed by Internet auction sellers who take payment and fail to deliver goods, who deliver them late, who deliver goods worth less than advertised, or who fail to disclose key information about the sale. The Attorney General's Office has taken action against several Iowa sellers who failed to deliver items people paid for.

Remember, an online auction house is like a bazaar or like your newspaper classified section. The auction itself usually doesn't own the merchandise -- or guarantee it.

**Follow these tips to protect yourself from Internet auction fraud or frustration:**

- **Pay with a credit card whenever possible.** Then, if necessary, you can seek a credit from the card issuer if the merchandise is not delivered or is misrepresented. Ask to pay by COD (cash-on-delivery) or ask about using an escrow agent if you must pay by certified check or money order. Escrow agents act as "middle-men."
- **Determine whether you or the seller pays the COD or escrow agent fee.**  
Verify the seller's information -- the name, phone number and a physical address (not just a post office box.)
- **Don't do business without this information.** Determine who pays shipping and handling, and verify if returns are accepted by the seller.
- **Confirm all details if you win the bid, and print all documents and e-mail.** (Confirm if the item is an original or a reproduction, its condition, the costs for shipping and handling, etc.) Save the original description and all correspondence.

Read the FTC brochure: "Internet Auctions - A Guide for Buyers and Sellers." Find it and more information at the Federal Trade Commission site: [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)

For more information, or to file a complaint, go to the Iowa Attorney General's web site or contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division, Hoover Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. Call 515-281-5926. Visit the Attorney General's web site at [www.iowaAttorneyGeneral.org](http://www.iowaAttorneyGeneral.org) Email: [consumer@ag.state.ia.us](mailto:consumer@ag.state.ia.us).

Here are some sites and links to other good sources of information about online shopping and related topics:

Federal Trade Commission:  
<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/online/auctions.htm>  
<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/menu-internet.htm>

National Consumer League's Internet Fraud Watch:  
<http://www.fraud.org/internet/inttip/inttip.htm>

Click here to view the April 30, 2003 news release on [Internet Auctions](#).

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