



FLORIDA CONSUMER NEWSLETTER

February 2025

A publication of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

TOLL VIOLATION SCAM

Be on the lookout for fake texts claiming you owe money for unpaid tolls.

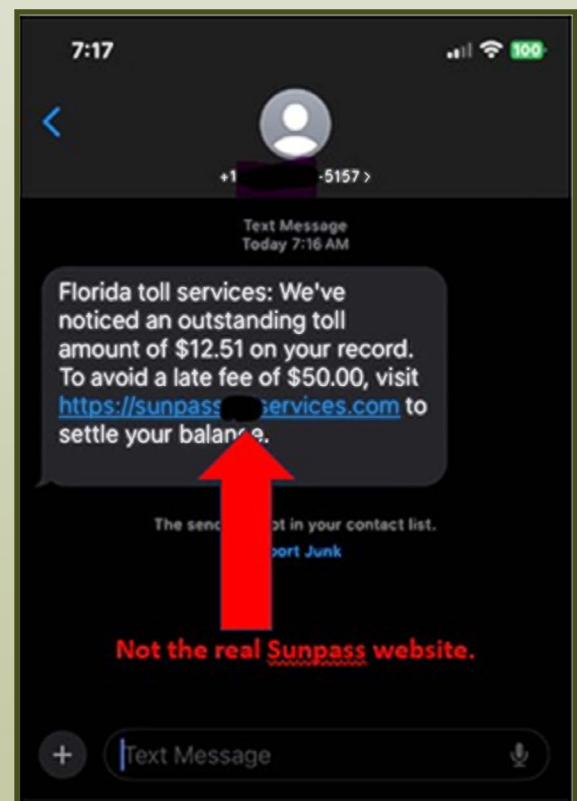
Whether you've driven through a toll recently or not, you might've gotten a text saying you owe money for unpaid tolls. It's most likely a scam. Scammers are pretending to be tolling agencies from coast to coast and sending texts demanding money. Learn how the scam works so you can avoid it.

The texts contain almost identical language. The "outstanding toll amount" is similar among complaints reported across the country. However, the link provided within the text is created to impersonate the state's toll service name, and phone numbers appear to change between states.

In Florida, a photo is taken of a vehicle's license plate when no SunPass or any other Florida compatible transponder is detected as it travels under the tolling equipment. A Toll Enforcement Invoice is then mailed to the registered owner of the vehicle for the toll(s) incurred over a 30-day period, plus a \$2.50 administrative charge. Email is used by SunPass to communicate with customers, including SunPass Account Statements and other account related matters. However, SunPass does not send official Toll Enforcement Invoices through email or text. Official Toll Invoices are sent only through U.S. Mail, and the only official website to make a payment online is SunPass.com.

If you receive one of these smishing texts, the following is suggested:

1. Verify claims, numbers, and websites by independent means.
2. Check to see if you owe past tolls at www.SunPass.com (www.TollByPlate.com will also route customers to www.SunPass.com). You can also contact the SunPass Customer Service Center at 1-888-TOLL-FLA (1-888-865-5352).
3. If you clicked any link or provided your information, take efforts to secure your personal information and financial accounts. Dispute any unfamiliar charges.
4. File a complaint with the IC3, www.ic3.gov, and be sure to include:
 - a. The phone number from where the text originated.
 - b. The website listed within the text.
5. Delete any smishing texts received.



Smishing: a social engineering attack using fake text messages to trick people into downloading malware, sharing sensitive information, or sending to cybercriminals.

www.FloridaConsumerHelp.com

1-800-HELP-FLA(435-7352) • Mon-Fri, 8a.m. - 5p.m., EST • 1-800-FL-AYUDA(352-9832)

SPAM TEXTS, EMAILS, AND JUNK MAIL

By Andrew Rayo, Consumer Education Specialist, FTC

If it's not scammers spamming your phone with texts or filling up your inbox with emails, it's your mailbox crammed with ads and other mail you didn't ask for. The junk messages and mail might seem endless, but there are some ways to help scale it back.

Scammers send [phishing texts and emails](#) that look legit to trick you into giving them personal or financial information. Legit companies might send mail that you just don't want — things like magazines, catalogs, or [prescreened offers of credit and insurance](#). While these aren't necessarily scams, they can pile up quickly.

To help you cut down on spam texts and emails:

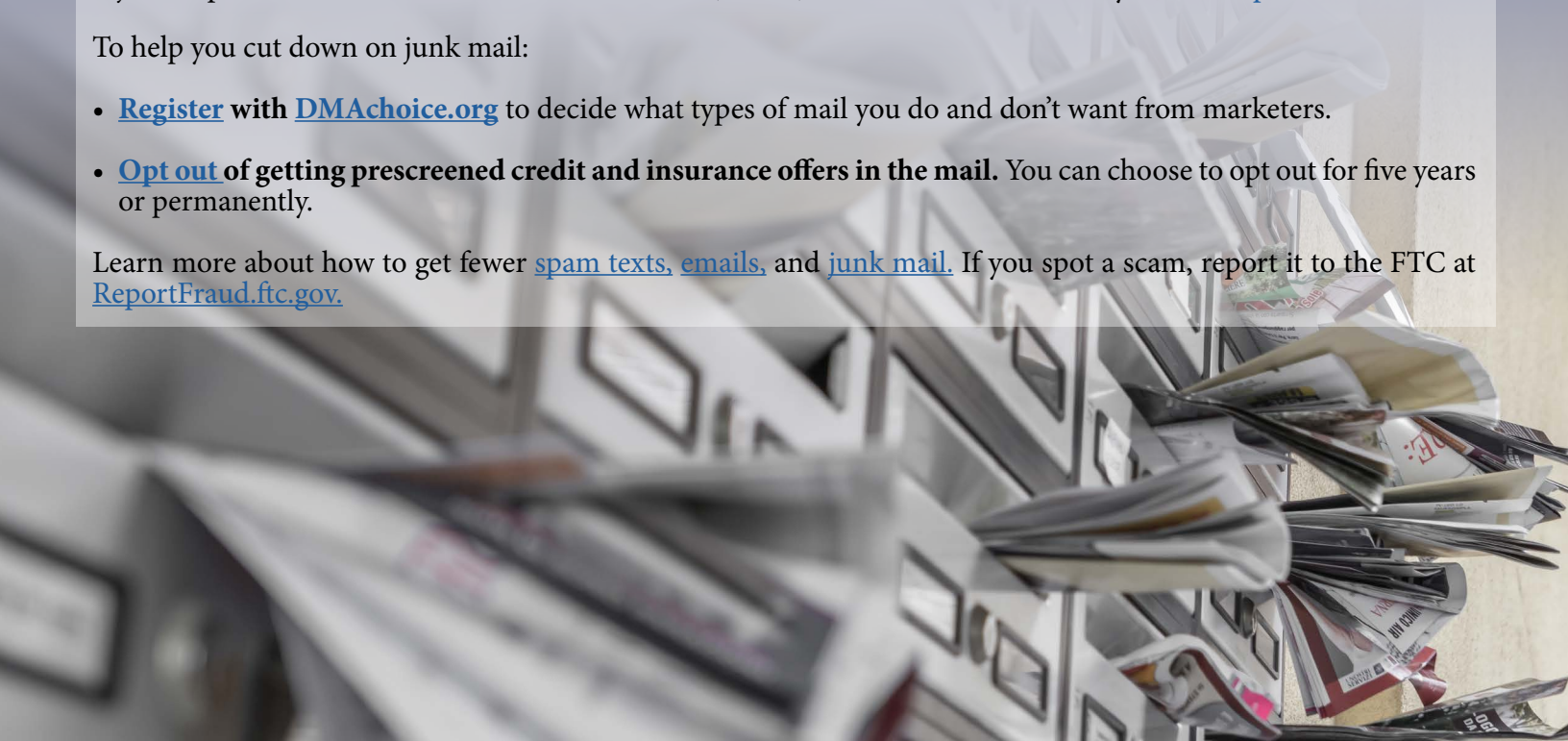


- **Use filters.** Check if your mobile phone has options to [filter and block](#) texts from unknown senders. Some call blocking apps can also help block unwanted messages. Many popular email providers (like Gmail or Yahoo Mail) have strong [spam filters](#) turned on by default. But if any spam gets into your inbox, mark it as [spam or junk](#).
- **Unsubscribe from unwanted emails.** Getting fewer unwanted emails helps you avoid clicking on links that can lead to [phishing attacks](#).
- **Report unwanted messages.** Unwanted messages often lead to scams. Report them. Use your phone's “report junk” option or forward unwanted texts to 7726 (SPAM) and unwanted emails to your [email provider](#).

To help you cut down on junk mail:

- **Register with [DMAchoice.org](#)** to decide what types of mail you do and don't want from marketers.
- **Opt out of getting prescreened credit and insurance offers in the mail.** You can choose to opt out for five years or permanently.

Learn more about how to get fewer [spam texts, emails, and junk mail](#). If you spot a scam, report it to the FTC at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](#).



RECEIVED AN UNEXPECTED PACKAGE



By Jim Kreidler, Consumer Education Specialist, FTC

What could be better than opening the mailbox or the front door and finding an unexpected package? Free gifts might seem like fun — but when an unexpected package lands on your doorstep, it may come with a higher cost than you expected.

Scammers are sending people fake “luxury” items like rings, beauty products, and even Bluetooth speakers. This is sometimes called a “brushing scam,” so called because it’s “brushing up” — or increasing — the scammer’s sales. How does it work? Scammers or sellers of knock-off merchandise find your address or other personal information online. They send you goods you never ordered and use your information to write fake online reviews about their products in your name — which helps them boost sales.

“Who cares if they write a fake review in my name?” you might say. Well, if you got a package you didn’t order, it means someone likely has your personal information — and undoing the potential harm from identity theft could cost you time and money.

If you got an unexpected package you didn’t order:

- Change passwords on all your online shopping accounts in case they were compromised. If the package came from Amazon or another online marketplace, send the platform a message so they can investigate removing the seller.
- Check your credit weekly for free at [AnnualCreditReport.com](https://www.annualcreditreport.com) to monitor the information in your credit report and check for signs of [identity theft](#).
- Don’t contact the sender. If you search online for the sender and reach out, anyone who responds will likely try to get more sensitive information from you to try to steal your money.

Got a package you didn’t order? Keep the merchandise and report fake reviews and scams to the FTC at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/identity-theft).

SCAM ALERT: QR CODE ON AN UNEXPECTED PACKAGE

By Alvaro Puig, Consumer Education Specialist, FTC

An unexpected package from an unknown sender arrives in your name. You open it and find a note that says it's a gift, but it doesn't say who sent it. The note also says to scan a QR code to find out who sent it — or to get instructions on how to return it. Did someone really send you a gift? Or is it an attempt to steal your personal information?

If you know it's really a gift, you can keep it. But know that the unexpected package could be a new twist on a [brushing scam](#) that could steal your personal information.

If you scan the QR code, it could take you to a phishing website that steals your personal information, like credit card numbers or usernames and passwords. It could also download malware onto your phone and give hackers access to your device.

If you scanned the QR code and entered your credentials, like your username and password, into a website, change your password right away. Create a [strong password](#) that is hard to guess, and turn on [two-factor authentication](#).

If you're concerned someone has your personal information, get your free credit report at [AnnualCreditReport.com](#). Look for signs that someone is using your information, like accounts in your name you don't recognize. (You can get a free credit report every week.)

Also review your credit card bills and bank account statements and look for transactions you didn't make. And consider taking other [steps to protect your identity](#), like freezing your credit or putting a fraud alert on your credit report.

If you think someone stole your identity, report it, and get a personal recovery plan at [IdentityTheft.gov](#).

What else can you do to protect your personal information? Regularly update your [computer software](#) and [your phone](#) to get the latest security patches. And learn to recognize a [phishing email or text message](#).

And what about the package? The [law says you can keep it as a gift](#).



CONSUMER RESOURCES

Popular Consumer Resources Topics

[Animals](#)

Find information about animal diseases, Florida's Pet Law, traveling with dogs and cats, moving horses and other animals, and more.

[Business Search](#)

Find out if a business is licensed and registered with us.

[Buy "Fresh From Florida"](#)

Learn where you can find fresh fruits, vegetables, seafood, ferns, Christmas trees and other products from the Sunshine State.

[Health and Safety](#)

Find information about food safety, disaster preparedness, product recalls, food- and mosquito-borne illnesses, and more.

[Landlord/Tenant Law in Florida](#)

A summary of Florida's Landlord/Tenant Law

[See all Consumer Resources items](#)

With scammers targeting our entire life savings with their schemes, we all need to be alert and know how to detect their latest tricks. Something as simple as talking about scams you know about is a great way to help you and your community stay protected. And being part of this solution doesn't require training or a lot of time!

The FDACS and FTC provide information on hundreds of different scams both in print and online. Here are a few ideas to help you become a fraud fighter.

- **Learn more about what scammers say and do.** Visit [Consumer Resources](#) at FDACS.gov and consumer.ftc.gov where you'll find articles, consumer alerts, and advice to help you spot and avoid scams.
- **Check out resources in multiple languages.** If you know people who prefer to get information in their native language, ftc.gov/languages has materials in more than a dozen languages.
- **Get print materials to share with your community.** Go to ftc.gov/BulkOrder and order free resources on a variety of consumer topics. Delivery is also free.
- **Keep up with the latest.** Sign up to receive the monthly [Florida Consumer E-Newsletter](#) for FTC consumer alerts at ftc.gov/ConsumerAlerts to get email updates on recent scams, announcements, and advice.
- **Share what you know.** Have a conversation, share the [Florida Consumer E-Newsletter](#) with friends and family, leave FTC materials where people will see them, or post on social media. Are you part of a group? Invite an [FDACS outreach coordinator](#) to speak to your club or organization, or consider using [Pass It On](#) or [Pásalo](#) presentations, complete with notes and supporting materials, to start a conversation about scams. All FTC content is in the public domain, which means there's no copyright or permission needed to use it.

FDACS is Florida's clearinghouse for consumer complaints. Visit [File a Complaint](#) to file a complaint about a business in Florida. Additionally, the FTC wants to hear about scams in any language, even if you didn't lose money. Report in English at ReportFraud.ftc.gov — or in Spanish at ReporteFraude.ftc.gov. To report in other languages, call (877) 382-4357 and press 3 to speak to an interpreter in your preferred language.

ABOUT THE FDACS DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES

FDACS is Florida's state consumer protection agency responsible for regulating charities and handling consumer complaints. FDACS handles more than 400,000 consumer complaints and inquiries, oversees more than 500,000 regulated devices, entities, and products like gas pumps and grocery scales, performs over 61,000 lab analyses on products like gasoline and brake fluid, performs nearly 9,000 fair ride inspections, and returned over \$2.8 million to consumers through mediations with businesses.



The Division of Food Safety monitors food from the point of manufacturing and distribution through wholesale and retail sales to ensure the public of safe, wholesome and properly represented food products.

CLICK THE ICON ABOVE TO SEE THE LATEST RECALLS, MARKET WITHDRAWALS, & SAFETY ALERTS.



The Consumer Product Safety Commission provides consumer product recall information as part of the agency's mission to protect consumers and families from hazardous products.

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The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is the state's clearinghouse for consumer complaints, protection and information. Consumers who would like information about filing a complaint against a business or who believe fraud has taken place can visit us online at FloridaConsumerHelp.com or contact the department's consumer protection and information hotline by calling 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352) or 1-800-FL-AYUDA (352-9832) for Spanish speakers.