



U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,
Firearms and Explosives

Washington, DC 20226

Advisory Letter

Online Scams Using Fraudulent Federal Firearms Licenses

March 7, 2014

TO ALL FEDERAL FIREARMS LICENSEES AND FIREARM PURCHASERS

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) is providing the following information to make you aware of fraudulent online firearms sales. Some individuals are using fraudulently altered Federal firearms licenses to sell but never deliver firearms online.

A typical online scam starts with an online firearm advertisement. Purchasers who respond to the advertisement by telephone or email receive an invalid, counterfeit copy of a license that appears to be valid. After sending payment, the purchaser never receives the advertised firearm(s) and the fraudulent seller removes the original online advertisement and contact information.

To help you avoid this scam, licensees are reminded that only transactions between licensees require the furnishing of a certified copy of the license. Licensees should consider only providing the basic license number to individuals (e.g., 1-75-12345). The individuals can use FFL eZ Check to confirm the validity of the license number before sending payment for firearms advertised online. FFL eZ Check is on the ATF website at <http://www.atf.gov/content/firearms/firearms-industry/applications-FFL-eZ-check>. If you have general questions regarding the FFL eZ Check system, you may contact the Federal Firearms Licensing Center at 1-877-560-2435.

You may also wish to contact other Federal, State, and local resources regarding internet fraud, to include the Federal Bureau of Investigation (www.IC3.gov), the Federal Trade Commission (www.ftc.gov), your State's Attorney General's office (<http://www.atf.gov/files/publications/download/p/atf-p-5300-5-31st-edition/attorneys-general.pdf>) and your local law enforcement agency.

If you are a Federal firearms licensee who believes your license has been fraudulently used, stolen, or compromised, please contact your local ATF field office as soon as possible for assistance. A list of local field offices can be found at <http://www.atf.gov/content/contact-us/local-atf-office>.