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Fake Walmart Satisfaction Survey Could Prove Costly to Recipients

St. Louis, Mo., Sept. 24, 2009 - The Better Business Bureau (BBB) is warning consumers to beware of a scam that claims to be an online satisfaction survey from the retailing giant Walmart, but instead is an attempt to steal personal credit information.

The scheme, which first became public two years ago and has been sent to St. Louis area consumers in recent days, announces in an e-mail that “you have been selected to access the Walmart 2 Steps Survey and win a \$150.00 gift certificate.” A link then takes the recipient to a nine-question survey called “How do we rate?” and a second page that asks for such information as social security number, credit card number, a three-digit card verification number and the name of the bank issuing the card.

A St. Louis area businessman said he received the survey in his e-mail last week.

Michelle Corey, president and CEO of the BBB, notes that the company has disavowed any involvement with the survey. “It is a sick trick, pure and simple,” she said, “although it has every appearance of being legitimate.”

Andy Hough, owner and manager of Handyman Connection of St. Louis, a Fenton-based home repair and remodeling company, said the survey initially had him fooled. “It looks like Walmart,” he said of the link. “It’s very professionally done; it looks credible.” He said the request for personal and credit information sounded like warning signals, but said of the scammers, “they’re going to get somebody.”

A company spokesperson for Walmart told the BBB that her company never asks for credit card details or social security numbers as part of its survey forms. She also said company surveys require that a customer enter a number from a Wal-mart receipt. She asked that anyone receiving a bogus survey forward it to abuse@walmart.com.

The BBB offers the following advice to consumers hoping to avoid online scams:

- Don’t be fooled by the appearance of an e-mail or Web site. Thieves have become very sophisticated in their ability to replicate sites, even providing direct links to a company’s history, departments and contact information.
- Don’t fall for offers promising a significant cash payout or credit for taking a simple survey. If something looks too good to be true, it likely is.

- Do not, under any circumstances, give personal detailed credit information to anyone until you have verified who will be using the information and how it will be used.
- If you feel you may be the victim of a scam, contact the BBB at www.bbb.org or 314-645-3300.