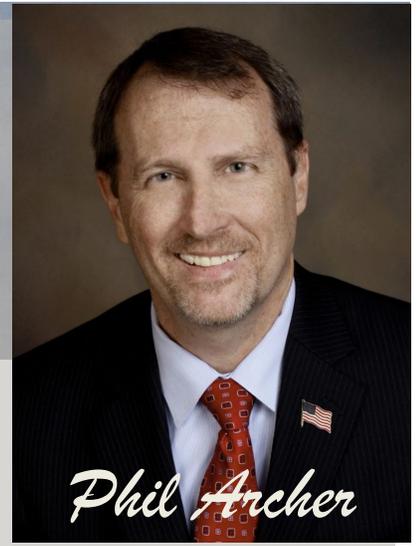




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The Monthly Brief

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TRENDY RIP-OFF



The BBB is reporting numerous complaints from shoppers fooled by ads promoting a hair straightener

called Trendy Iron. Consumers pay for the product, but it never arrives.

How the Scam Works:

You are scrolling through social media and see an ad in your feed. This new straightening iron claims to produce amazing results. The ad features convincing photo images of women styling their hair with the new product. It looks great!

You click the ad and purchase the Trendy Iron. Everything seems normal at first. You get a confirmation email and guaranteed shipping date. But that day comes and goes. When you check the website, there's no way to reach the company. In other similar cases, the site is no longer even active.

Trendy Iron is not the only phony product being promoted on social media sites. Ads for clothes, cosmetics, supplements, toys, and even pets are all common.

Before buying online confirm the site has real working contact info and test it.

If the price is significantly lower than other established shopping websites, there's probably something wrong.

Do your research, read online reviews, check if the site is secure (https in the domain) and consider using a payment service like PayPal, not your credit card.

*BBB

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BBB Annual Scam Report

The Better Business Bureau Institute for Marketplace Trust recently published its second annual [BBB Scam Tracker Annual Risk Report](#). It contains a wealth of information about how scammers operate, who they target, and what group you may belong to that could be at risk. They've also published the stories of victims who were targeted in the [years Top 10 scams](#), and tips on how you can avoid them. The #1 scam, up from 4th last year, were fraudulent online purchases.

The report shows that the total number of Scam Tracker reports in 2017 increased 46% over 2016. However reports where the victims suffered a financial loss decreased from 18.8% in 2016 to 15.8% in 2017. That's good news that educational efforts are having a positive impact. The median dollar loss was also down from \$274 to \$228, a decrease of 17%. The top method of contact in both years was by phone and the top payment method was by credit card.

The [BBB Scam Tracker](#) is an online service that allows consumers to both report scams and see what criminal fraud is taking place in their area and nationally. It's been very successful and we also highly recommend signing up for [BBB Scam Alerts](#) delivered directly to your email. You can also get information on the various types of scams and how to avoid them on their [Scam Tips page](#).

*BBB

ARREST WARRANT SCAM



Law enforcement agencies across the country are reporting incidents of scammers posing as police, calling citizens and threatening them with arrest. The victim is told they must pay a fine, usually by money card to avoid a warrant being issued. What adds to the believability is the caller ID displays both the number and name of the actual law enforcement agency in the victim's area. It's called [Caller ID Spoofing](#) and it's easy to do. It's also been used in IRS tax scams that we've told you about before.

This summer the [Brevard County Sheriff's Office](#) and [Florida Today](#) reported local incidents of this scam with a clever new twist. Like other scams the victim is asked for \$5000 via a money card, but then given a phone number to call with the card number once the victim buys it. If they're busy ripping off others, the call goes to voice mail and states "You have reached the Brevard County Sheriff's Department, all Deputies are busy assisting other callers now." The message goes on to request the victim leave their call back info and to dial 911 if it's an emergency. Unbelievable!

AVOID THIS SCAM and understand that no law enforcement agency will ever call and ask for a payment or warn about a warrant. Frankly, they'd rather it be surprise visit. But if you're curious, the [FDLE does have a website](#) to search for active arrest warrants. Then you can anonymously arrange one of those "surprise visits" and be eligible for a reward by contacting [CRIMELINE](#) with the persons whereabouts

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