



FBI batteries scam

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The bureau warns that scammers are using “vulnerabilities in the global supply chain” and constant consumer demand for new batteries to sell a variety of counterfeits and unauthorized replicas online.

The FBI’s warning is not specific to laptops or smartphones, which makes sense given that batteries are now found in everything from cars, scooters, e-bikes, e-cigarettes and trains to drones and more. Sometimes they need to be replaced.

Some of the risks of using alternative manufacturers or battery types include overheating that may cause fires or explosions and result in personal injury or property damage. Other risks include poor battery performance, or complete product failure.

“When designed, manufactured, and used properly, batteries are a safe power source. However, batteries can cause injury if they are designed improperly, made of low-quality materials, assembled incorrectly, charged improperly, or damaged. Always research the legitimacy of the seller and battery manufacturer before buying,” the FBI’s Internet Crime Center (IC3) says.

The FBI recommends consumers “always purchase” batteries from legitimate and trusted sources. These include “authorized dealers or distributors that sell batteries tested by nationally recognized testing laboratories.”

Also, device manufacturers can sell batteries directly via their websites, or provide a list of trusted vendors. Consumers can also find a list of nationally recognized testing labs via a page on the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

In its list of dos, don’ts and “watch out for” actions when purchasing batteries, the FBI notes that it is good for consumers to shop around before purchasing but warns: “batteries sold at deep discounts or at significantly lower-than-average prices are likely counterfeit.”

It also suggests consumers avoid aftermarket batteries “when possible” because they might be dangerous. Consumers should research and read reviews because some aftermarket sellers aren’t trustworthy.

It says to “always avoid” batteries that are: not properly packaged; have misprinted or misspelled labels; have labels that peel off; or do not have official manufacturer batch numbers.

The tech industry has struggled with various semiconductor and component shortages after the pandemic.



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Fakes aren't the only worry when it comes to batteries: reported battery shortages have been related to increasing demand for electric vehicles (EVs).

The World Economic Forum is worried about a global shortage of lithium as the world attempts to shift to EVs to cut CO2 emissions to net zero. The International Energy Agency predicts global lithium shortages by 2025 and notes that two billion EVs need to be on the road by 2050 to reach net zero. Last year, just 6.6 million EVs were sold.

That's because scammers are preying on the vulnerabilities of the global supply chain and the public's never-ending need for new batteries to sell a plethora of counterfeit or unlicensed replicas online, according to the bureau.

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