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Shopping for the holidays is a familiar scene at Lloyd Center Mall in northeast Portland.

PHOTO BY DONOVAN M. SMITH/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Watching your dollar as the holidays close-in

BY DONOVAN M. SMITH
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The decorations are up, the jolly old songs are playing (some with a merry remix from your favorite pop stars), and of course the gifts are being purchased and wrapped as the clock steadily winds down on the holiday season.

Spending money is a familiar scene from one of America's favorite past times. But shopping for Christmas in an economy that is still far from healthy, with many-a-pocket hollowed out, also raises concerns. How do you make sure that when the spell of the holidays where off on Jan 1, you are not left with unsavory ends?

Perhaps one of the main things to be vigilant for is scammers. As people look to open up their pocketbooks,

Holiday Rush Hour

more scammers are looking for your private information—like your banking number -- setting up shop, usually online to steal from your checking and credit card accounts.

A favorite of swindlers this year is fake cash

lenders, according to experts with the Oregon Attorney General's office.

Diane Childs of the Oregon Division of Financial and Corporate Services, said there are only three licensed payday lenders in the state of Oregon, a fact many consumers may not know judging by the amount of complaints the state is receiving this year.

Childs says unlicensed payday loan scammers are offering interest rates online that are well above the state's limit. She warns that while it may seem tempting to deal with some of these dealers, it is always best to go with a licensed lender. A list of red flags to look for when shopping for payday loans can be found on a newly created website, stopunlicensedloans.com.

The Better Business Bureau also sent out their list of warnings this year, asking people to look out for phone

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