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Customs and Border Protection to Virgin Islanders: Beware of Counterfeit Goods When Shopping this Holiday Season

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With today being Black Friday and Cyber Monday fast approaching, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is reminding consumers to be on the lookout for [counterfeit and pirated goods](#), particularly when shopping online.

CBP said every year it seizes millions of counterfeit goods from countries around the world as part of its mission to protect U.S. businesses and consumers. These goods include fake versions of popular products, such as [smartphones](#) and related [accessories](#), [electronics](#), [apparel](#), [shoes](#), [cosmetics](#), and [high-end luxury goods](#). Sold online and in stores, counterfeit goods hurt the U.S. economy, cost Americans their jobs, threaten consumer health and safety, and fund criminal activity.

“Counterfeiters are focused on making a profit; they are not focused on consumer safety,” said Leida Colon, Assistant Director of Field Operations in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. “Buying counterfeit goods can expose you and your family to health and safety risks while the proceeds support criminal enterprises.”

There are several steps that consumers can take to [protect themselves](#) when shopping online. Purchase goods only from reputable retailers and be wary of third party vendors. Check seller reviews and verify there is a working phone number and address for the seller, in case you have questions about the legitimacy of a product.

“Bad actors continue to exploit the dramatic growth of e-commerce to sell counterfeit goods and other illicit products through online platforms, particularly during the holiday season when shoppers are looking for deals,” said Mayra Claudio, Assistant Port Director for the San Juan Area Port. “If the price of the product seems too good to be true, it probably is – and that can cause real problems for you, your family, and legitimate businesses.”

Nationwide in Fiscal Year 2020, CBP seized 26,503 shipments containing goods that violated intellectual property rights. The total estimated value of the seized goods, had they been genuine, was nearly \$1.3 billion.

The CBP San Juan Field Office in Fiscal Year 2020 seized 2,443 shipments containing goods that violate intellectual property rights with an MSRP value of \$46 million.

Among some notable seizures:

- On May 27, CBP Officers seized a shipment consisting of 844 counterfeit [alloy car wheels](#) imported into the island. The estimated manufacturer suggested retail price (MSRP) of all the counterfeit products seized is approximately \$238,000, had the goods been genuine.
- On July 21, CBP Officers and Import Specialists seized one thousand counterfeit [designer and luxury watches](#) in a commercial shipment coming from the Dominican Republic. The estimated manufacturer suggested retail price (MSRP) of the seized products is approximately \$420, 583, had the goods been genuine.
- On February 7, CBP Officers and Import Specialists seized 138 shipments of counterfeit products including stacks of [fake \\$100 bills](#).
- On June 11, CBP Officers and Import Specialists seized 560 sets of [fake Apple AirPods](#) imported into Puerto Rico from Hong Kong via air courier. Had these goods been genuine, the estimated manufacturer suggested retail price (MSRP) of the seized goods would have been an approximately \$111,440.

To address such violations the San Juan Trade Enforcement Team was created in October 2016. Since its inception the team has seized a total of 1,064,098 items totaling an estimated value of \$163,477,809. The top items seized in FY2020 are in order:

1. Purses/Wallets

2. Jewelry
3. Footwear
4. Electronics
5. Alcoholic Beverages
6. Watches
7. Clothing
8. Other Counterfeit Goods
9. Cigarettes
10. Prescription drugs

CBP said it has also established an educational initiative to raise consumer awareness about the consequences and dangers associated with purchasing counterfeit and pirated goods online or in stores. More information about that initiative is available at www.cbp.gov/fakegoodsrealdangers.

If you have any information regarding suspected fraud or illegal trade activity, please contact CBP through the [e-Allegations Online Trade Violation Reporting System](#) or by calling 1-800-BE-ALERT. Intellectual property rights violations can also be reported to the National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center at <https://www.iprcenter.gov/referral/> or by telephone at 1-866-IPR-2060.

For more information about protecting yourself from counterfeit and pirated goods, visit <https://www.stopfakes.gov/>.