

*Protecting Wisconsin Consumers for 75 Years*

## Rebates

Manufacturer's rebates are offered for everyday purchases like toothpaste and shampoo, as well as large ticket items like furnaces or a new car. There are even rebate programs for socks, diapers and motor oil.

Rebating is a popular budget-saving technique when used properly. Some manufacturers offer a specific cash refund, coupons, a free product or store credit. The Bureau of Consumer Protection has received many consumer complaints involving rebates. Here are some tips to help with the rebate process:

- Read the rebate form carefully before making the purchase so you are familiar with any special requirements, such as the need for cash register receipts, labels, uniform product codes, etc.
- Follow the instructions on the rebate form and enclose all required documentation in the envelope when filing for a rebate.
- Pay close attention to rebate expiration dates, proof-of-purchase requirements and any restrictions. Often, only one rebate is allowed per household or address.
- Rebates are provided after the purchase. You must pay taxes on the full purchase price of taxable items.
- Print information clearly and completely on rebate forms.
- Often each rebate request must be sent in a separate envelope.
- The rebate offer may only be appropriate for a purchase made during a specific time period. The toothpaste you bought last month may not meet the time requirements, even if it is the same brand.
- Follow mailing instructions carefully. Clearinghouses handle most refunds, not the manufacturer.
- Make a copy of all paperwork to be mailed when applying for a rebate. This information will be helpful in case of a problem or dispute.
- If you have problems receiving the rebate, write to the manufacturer of the product. Post office box numbers for rebate offers are usually closed when the rebate expires, so they are of little help. The manufacturer's address can usually be found on the product package.
- Read the handling time for the rebate. If no handling time frame is promised, you should receive your rebate within 30 days, but if specified you may not receive your rebate for up to 12 weeks, or even later in some cases.
- Pay close attention to any expiration of store credit usage.
- Not all retailers place rebate application material on or by the product. You may have to visit their customer service area or locate a central location for rebate material.

Finally, as you decide to purchase items because of rebates, or if you spend a great amount of time completing rebate forms and sending them in, decide if you really need the product and if purchasing it over one without a rebate is worth all the effort.

For more information or to file a complaint, visit our website or contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection.

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