

November 2021



Suspect/Counterfeit Items & Electrical Safety During the Holidays



The start of the holiday season means shoppers across the country may be participating in the biggest shopping days of the year: Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and in online events such as Cyber Monday. Whether shoppers are looking for electrical items such as lights, power strips, timers, or gifts for loved ones such as gaming equipment or headphones, they'll be searching for the best deals. While it's tough to turn away from low prices, shoppers need to remain vigilant. Included in the list of the most counterfeited items seized by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CPB) are consumer electronics and electrical products such as those that may be purchased commonly for gifts or decorating. Counterfeit consumer electronics and electrical products may pose a significant electrical hazard as they can lead to fire, shock, or explosion which may result in deaths, injuries, and substantial property loss. Below are some tips to help keep you and your family safe this holiday season!

Shopping Tips

-  **Trust your instincts- If the price seems too good to be true it probably is!**
-  **Use reputable retailers that have a history of providing quality goods**
-  **Scrutinize labels, packaging, and contents (look at photos on manufacturer site to compare)**
-  **Insist on secure transactions (look for https- "s" stands for secure; or verify a lock symbol is there)**
-  **Guard your personal information from potential scammers**
-  **Report Suspect/Counterfeit Products and remove them from use**

Reference
Shopping
Online
Securely
[Link](#)

Can you identify which item is counterfeit? (Answer on page 2)

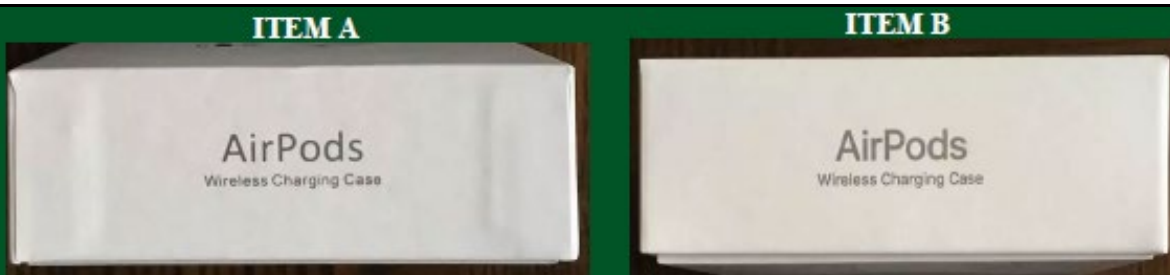


Figure 1¹

¹ **Figure 1:** Photo's courtesy of [How to Spot Fake AirPods: A Step-by-Step Guide](#) by Herby Jasmin (February 2020)

To ensure the electrical product you are purchasing complies with product safety test standards, look for a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory (NRTL) listing mark. Some common NRTL's that you will encounter in the United States are Underwriters Laboratories (UL), Intertek (ETL), and CSA Group (CSA) which should not be confused with CE. For a full list of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) approved NRTL's visit OSHA's [website](#).

What is "CE" and why is this not considered an NRTL?

CE means Conformité Européenne and when on commercial products represents that the manufacturer or importer self-affirmed that their goods conform with European health, safety, and environmental protection standards. CE **is NOT** a quality indicator or certification mark, nor does it ensure a third-party has evaluated and certified products to a specific standard. CE **is NOT** an NRTL and is not recognized by OSHA.



Figure 2²

Electrical hazards caused by short circuits or overheating from counterfeit and substandard electrical products used for decorating this holiday season can result in fire, shock, or explosion

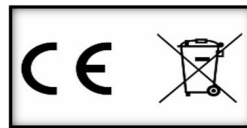


Figure 3³



S/CI Resources for DOE Employees & Contractors

- ❄ Suspect/Counterfeit Items [webpage](#) (energy.gov)
- ❄ Suspect/Counterfeit Powerpedia [website](#)
- ❄ Contact the S/CI SME by emailing gabrielle.holcomb@hq.doe.gov



ANSWER to "Can you identify which item is counterfeit?" pg. 1: * ITEM A is counterfeit. Note that the font is different than that of the genuine item and that the font is inconsistent. The overall package quality is lower than that of the genuine product package.

*REVISED FROM PREVIOUS VERSION ISSUED ON 11/17/2021 WHICH INCORRECTLY STATED ITEM B AS THE COUNTERFEIT- 11/23/2021

² **Figure 2:** Picture courtesy of Elkhart Fire Department warns cheap surge protectors can cause fires by [Ed Ernstes](#), WSBT-22 (December 2016)

³ **Figure 3:** All three pictures are from *These Christmas tree lights – bought online at AliExpress, eBay and Wish – could catch fire or electrocute you* by [Matt Stevens](#) (December 2019)