



Press release

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The FH observes an upsurge in fake watches purchased online

Ads published on social networks are encouraging Internet users to buy counterfeit watches. Because of the scale this problem has attained in recent weeks, the Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry FH urges caution in the face of these fraudulent practices, which can be very costly for their victims. Large numbers of consignments have been intercepted and destroyed by Swiss customs.

For a number of months, the FH has noted an upsurge in purchases of counterfeit watches. Ads on social networks, particularly Facebook, are at the root of the problem. Such ads target specific profiles and generally appear only on mobile terminals. They imply that watches made by prestigious Swiss brands are being sold with a substantial discount, sometimes as much as 85% of the retail price. By clicking on the ad, the user is redirected to a dedicated sales website where the transaction is finalized. Some sites explicitly indicate the counterfeit character of products on offer, while others do not, relying on the ambiguity of discounts to deceive buyers as to the nature of the products. Details shown on the debit advice of the buyer's credit card always mention a firm based in China.

Several hundred cases have been reported by Swiss customs in the space of a few weeks. In view of the size of the problem, the Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry is duty bound to inform the public and issue a warning in respect of these unfair and misleading practices. The FH would like to remind anyone interested in buying a watch that they should be extremely vigilant in verifying the authenticity of articles offered for sale. When fake Swiss watches are seized by customs, the consumer is doubly penalised. Imitation watches are destroyed and the price paid for the timepiece is not reimbursed. In addition, buyers are required to pay costs incurred by customs as a result of their intervention.

To avoid confusion, the FH advises Internet users to make enquiries about the website selling the goods, read comments posted by other consumers, and steer clear of offers that are "too good to be true". A website that is new, not listed in search engines or that provides no valid contact address, should put users on their guard. Moreover, even where coordinates are mentioned on the website, they generally do not correspond to information provided for registration of the domain name (Whois). The official websites of different Swiss brands clearly indicate their authorised distribution network.

For their part, the FH and watch brands concerned are taking steps to have identified websites closed down. In addition, social networks and the main online payment organizations have been informed of these practices.



The Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry FH is the umbrella organisation of the Swiss watch industry and has almost 500 members, i.e. 90% of the total number of Swiss watch manufacturers. Its mission includes working to defend and develop the industry in Switzerland and abroad. The FH offers its members a wide range of services, including measures to combat the sale of counterfeit watches. As part of its tasks and in collaboration with the Swiss customs authorities, it conducts investigations into purchases made by members of the public. It collects information with a view to identifying and dismantling fraudulent sales networks.

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