

Government auction sites gaining appeal

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WASHINGTON – More and more people are learning that e-Bay, the popular Internet auction site, isn't the only place to find bargains on-line. Another place to shop is government auction sites.

Karen Lenahan said she paid just \$60 for a 14 k gold watch she found on steal-it-back.com, a site that sells confiscated or unclaimed items from police departments across the country.

"I'm addicted to the site," said Lenahan. "I've bought about 200 items, maybe more."

Tom Lane, a spokesperson for the operation, lists off some of the items typically featured on the site; TVs, transformers, sporting goods equipment, radios, Play Station 2s.

"Everyday, we're bringing more and more trucks of items in from the police departments, processing them through our warehouse," he said. "On an hourly basis, items are going up on our site."

Lenahan said she paid \$10 for a 1906 doll that she believes is worth about \$1,300. She also bought a Nieman Marcus jacket for \$40. She said the jacket still had the price tag attached -- \$279. Lenahan said she has also bought rings, watches, camcorders and cameras.

"Auctions are a good deal for the taxpayer, because not only does it raise money that can be used in place of tax dollars, but also takes those items off our rolls so we no longer have to pay for the upkeep and maintenance of them," said Casey Coleman, manager of the government web portal, firstgov.gov.

Coleman said the government's central auction site features goods from the IRS, U.S. Defense Department, U.S. Marshals Service, and other agencies. Casey says it includes, personal property, real estate, used automobiles, boats or recreational vehicles; even time shares.

The government sites do not put weapons of any kind or explosives up for sale.

Not everyone thinks the government auction sites are such a good idea. The group called 'Citizens Against Government Waste' says the government is often selling items well below their worth, and while this may mean great bargains for the buyer, overall it is cheating the government out of potential revenue.

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