

January - Internet Safety

We all know the internet can be a very useful tool, and the possibilities on the internet seem endless. Most often the internet is used to pay bills, conduct research for a student's homework, networking or communicating with friends and family, and for entertainment purposes. It can also be a dangerous place if we are not careful. Many crimes are committed by using the internet as a tool or pathway to commit crime. Taking a few precautions can go a long way in keeping you and your family safe from internet predators and criminals.

Online Purchases

Establish family rules for making online purchases and follow them carefully. If possible, keep one credit card set aside for internet transactions. You can monitor your account and track purchases easier. Take this opportunity to teach children to be savvy consumers. Do not allow children to sign-up or commit to "special deals" on the internet unless they discuss it with you first. Remember that "free" does not always end up being "free" in the long run. Here are some suggested e-commerce Crime Prevention Tips:

- Learn as much as you can about the product and seller.
- Know the company's authenticity, shipping procedures and rates, and return policies.
- Read the fine print.
- If you are required to use a password, do not use something easy to guess by an offender.
- Use secure payment websites before entering credit card information.
- Keep documents like order confirmations so they can be produced in the event of a dispute or other related problem.

Meeting People Online

The internet is a great place to meet people but remember that there are some individuals out there who are not who they say they are. Many scams are committed by befriending someone on the internet and then the other person requests money for some emotionally appealing plea. We suggest that you **not** send someone money, especially when you have never met them in person and know them personally. We see too many of these scams reported to police and they are very difficult to investigate and prosecute. If a face-to-face meeting or date is planned at some point, meet in a public place with no further expectations planned ahead of time. Always leave yourself a way to end the meeting on your terms. Do not send pictures or personal information online to strangers. It is especially dangerous to send provocative pictures to anyone, even to those people you know. Once a picture is sent, you have no control over who else may see the picture, and once a picture is sent you can never get it back.

Children

Always take time to discuss these precautions with children. They are growing up exposed to much more technology than their parents did, and they are often much more adept at navigating the internet.

Downloading from the Internet

Computer viruses are a constant issue for most computer users. Have proper security measures in place on your computer and update security measures as needed. Discuss downloading issues with children.

Some downloads may come with a fee. If children are downloading research for homework assignments, make sure they know that they cannot copy and uses another person's work. If children want to use another person's research or material, make sure they know how to use citations.

Make Internet Use a Family Matter

Especially with children, establish rules for using the internet. Consider placing the family computer in a common area of the home. Make sure that anyone else in the room can view the computer screen content. Make sure the home computer has settings in place to limit and monitor the activity of children. Make the computer access for children age-appropriate for their maturity level.

Reporting Internet Crime

If you become the victim of an internet scam or related crime, you need to act quickly to reduce the amount of damage to your credit and good name. Keep a written record of what is occurring and who you speak with. Keep in mind that many of these crimes start elsewhere. We see many of these frauds originate in a different country. Local Law Enforcement can take an initial crime report, but generally we cannot effectively follow-up many of these crimes and bring an offender to justice when the crimes are perpetrated from outside our jurisdiction.

Fraud Victim

If you feel you have become an internet related victim to a fraud, consult with the following resources for addition help. By reporting internet crime, collectively these reports can make a difference and bring offenders to justice.

- Federal Bureau of Investigation-National White Collar Crime Center; <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/white-collar-crime>
- Federal Trade Commission-Protecting American's Consumers; <https://www.ftc.gov/>
- Wisconsin Department of Justice Consumer Protection; <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/dls/consumer-protection/consumer-protection>

If you have any additional questions, please contact the Glendale Police Department Crime Prevention Officer at 414-228-1753.