



National Cyber Security Awareness Month, Week #1: Take Online Safety Into Your Own Hands

Release Date: October 5, 2016

Media Contact: Jerad Albracht, 608-224-5007
Bill Cosh, Communications Director, 608-224-5020

MADISON – For the past 13 years, the National Cyber Security Awareness Month campaign has put a spotlight on October as the time to take stock of your online practices. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) urges consumers and businesses alike to take this opportunity to evaluate their online safety practices and to strengthen the protections around their web-enabled devices.

“Taking actions to protect your digital life may seem daunting, but significant protection can come from taking even some small, simple steps,” said Frank Frassetto, Division Administrator for Trade and Consumer Protection. “With that in mind, we encourage Wisconsinites to use this annual reminder to consider the different elements of their online lives and make use of a couple of tips to beef up security on their accounts and devices.”

While we rely on the organizations that build the products and websites we use to provide us with a baseline of protection, we, too, are responsible for the security of our own devices and for the information we share online. Throughout this Cyber Security Awareness Month, protect your safety online by challenging yourself to follow some of these best practices:

Things to do:

Change your passwords. Combine capital and lowercase letters with numbers and symbols to create a more secure password. For the best protection, do this on a regular basis and keep a different password for your email.

Run a computer check. The National Cyber Security Alliance offers a listing of free, trusted security check services at <https://staysafeonline.org/stay-safe-online/free-security-check-ups/>

Update your operating system and antivirus software. Having the latest security software, web browser and operating system updates in place is your best defense against viruses, malware and other online threats.

Things to know:

Keep personal information personal. Never give out personal or banking information on an unsolicited call or in response to an unsolicited email or text message. Period.

Share carefully on social media. Adjust the privacy settings for your accounts to block your content from strangers. Remember that sensitive information such as names, birth dates and Social Security numbers posted to social media accounts can be used by scammers to steal your identity.

Check the website address bar for “https.” Before you enter personal or banking information into a website, make sure the URL starts with “https” rather than “http.” The “s” stands for secure.

Things to consider:

Protect your email account. Many websites send password update and account access emails to consumers, so getting a hold of these emails could give a hacker access to all of your online accounts. Your email password should be your toughest password to decode.

Two-factor authentication. Two-factor authentication is a security process in which you provide two means of identification in order to log into a system – something you have and something you know. Something you have is typically a physical token, such as a fob, fingerprint or a code sent to your smartphone. Something you know is something memorized, such as a personal identification number (PIN) or a password.

Backup your data. At any given time, you are one hard drive crash, accidental delete, device theft or malware attack away from losing your sensitive documents and valuable photos, music and video files. To protect yourself from this calamity, regularly backup your data on physical drives and/or cloud-based storage.

For additional information or to file a complaint, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at datcp.wisconsin.gov, call the Consumer Protection Hotline at 800-422-7128 or send an e-mail to datcphotline@wisconsin.gov.

Connect with us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/wiconsumer.

Wisconsin Emergency Management's ReadyWisconsin campaign hosts a number of additional resources on its "Live Cyber Savvy" page: <http://readywisconsin.wi.gov/cyber/default.asp>

###