Cyber Safety

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. FOLLOW THE SAME COMMON-SENSE RULES THAT YOU FOLLOW IN "REAL LIFE."
2. DO NOT GIVE OUT PERSONAL INFORMATION TO STRANGERS. Never tell your computer passwords to anyone who asks for them in a chat room or by instant message. Think very carefully before giving out your real name, address, telephone number, work place, or any other bit of information that someone with evil thoughts could use to hurt you.
3. NEVER GIVE OUT YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER. If you are registering for a service that has a legitimate need for your Social Security number, provide the information through traditional mail.
4. KNOW WHO YOU ARE DOING BUSINESS WITH. Check out who you do business with on the internet, just as you would if you were trying to get your lawn mower repaired, looking for someone to do your taxes, etc.
5. BE VERY SELECTIVE WHO YOU GIVE YOUR CREDIT CARD NUMBER TO. Some web sites have set up systems for conducting secure credit card transactions by encrypting your information when you order merchandise. They are PROBABLY safer than sites without similar programs. Remember rule 4.
6. DO NOT DOWNLOAD FILE ATTACHMENTS FROM PEOPLE YOU DO NOT KNOW. This applies both to other web sites and e-mail. Most computer viruses come in the form of executable files.
7. THINK BEFORE YOU POST YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS. Otherwise your computer may end up being a dumping ground for junk-mail. If you have already become an e-mail junk-mail victim, try contacting your service provider to change your e-mail name and leave no forwarding address. If this is unsuccessful, you may need to change your service provider. Then, let only those you wish to communicate with know your new internet address

CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS ON THE INTERNET

The internet provides children and teenagers a whole new world to explore; but, every adventure in life has its hazards. The internet is no exception. Children and teenagers may be exposed to unacceptable materials featuring sexual, violent or other objectionable subjects.

Teenagers are most likely to participate in online discussions. While most contacts through the internet are harmless, there have been reported cases of pedophiles using online and bulletin board services to arrange meetings with children and teenagers. These meetings may lead to the injury or molestation of your child. If you have reason to believe your child or teen is being lured by someone for this or other illegal purposes, contact your local law enforcement agency IMMEDIATELY.

HOW YOU CAN REDUCE THE RISK TO YOUR CHILD

1. There are programs designed to block or filter the materials your computer may call up. These may be purchased at most computer stores, or downloaded through the internet. While providing some help, these programs enjoy limited success. Most service providers do their best to prevent distribution of such materials through their service and some offer password protected programs to open certain categories or "chat boxes." The bottom line is, however, basic parenting skills.
2. Spend time with your children at the computer. Guide them to areas that will hold their interest. and teach them to use bookmarks. Many parent, family, religious and hobby magazines list interesting web sites that target specific ages. Review the sites and bookmark those you would like your children to visit.
3. If you have older children or teens, ask them to teach you about the computer and the internet. During these sessions, you may learn more than which buttons to push.
4. Establish rules for using the internet, i.e.
   o Determine time of day and the length of time your children may be online
   o Do not give out personal information (i.e. real name, address, phone number, etc.)
   o Never agree to personally meet someone unless with the parent. That person claiming to be a 12 year old girl may be a 55 year old man!
   o Never send your picture
   o Do not answer messages that are inappropriate
   o Tell the parent if someone insists on violating the above rules
5. Watch for signals and investigate:
   o Talk with your children about the sites they are using and who they are e-mailing
   o Look at what they are printing (the trash can is a great source of intelligence)
   o Review their bookmarks
   o Check the computer's cache. The cache stores every visited page, leaving a great trail. (Kind of like checking your car's odometer the night after.) If your child is clearing the cache after every use, that may also be a clue. If he or she does not know about the cache, don't tell them! The cache should be cleared from time to time to free up space on your hard drive