



CONSUMER ADVOCATE

From the Consumer Protection Section at the office of Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine

INTERNET SAFETY: WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

Many children use the Internet every day, yet parents may not realize what information their children are sharing online, what content they are viewing, or what software they are downloading.

According to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 34 percent of 10- to 17-year-olds had posted their real names, telephone numbers, home addresses, or the names of their schools online, and 45 percent had posted their dates of birth or their ages. Plus, one third of youth Internet users (34 percent) had an unwanted exposure to sexual material.

Consumer Reports also says that younger children are more likely to click on links that would expose computers to malware (malicious software) and viruses.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) offers parents the following signs that a child might be at risk on the Internet:

- Your child spends large amounts of time online, especially at night.
- Your child is secretive about his or her online activities.
- You find pornography on your child's computer.
- Your child receives phone calls from people you don't know or is making calls, sometimes long distance, to numbers you don't recognize.
- Your child receives mail, gifts, or packages from someone you don't know.
- Your child turns the computer monitor off or quickly changes the screen when you enter the room.
- Your child is using an online account that belongs to someone else.

The FBI also offers parents

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CAR BUYERS: BEWARE OF FLOOD-DAMAGED CARS

This spring, floods devastated many regions throughout the United States. In addition to the immediate environmental impacts, flooding also can cause serious damage to vehicles, and some damaged vehicles eventually get sold to unsuspecting buyers.

Even if you don't live in a flood-ravaged area, flood-damaged cars can make their way to your region.

Resale of flood-damaged vehicles

After flooded cars are "totaled" by an insurance company, auto-salvage auctions may sell the cars to dealers hundreds of miles away. In some cases, dealers may not know a used car had been damaged in a flood.

A vehicle that has been totaled is a "salvage" vehicle. Its title should be branded "salvage." In Ohio, salvage vehicles cannot be resold to consumers (though they could be sold to a junkyard or for parts). Nevertheless, a salvage vehicle can be rebuilt and later sold, if it passes the inspection of the Ohio State Highway

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CONSUMER LAW WORKSHOPS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine is offering educational tools to help small businesses comply with Ohio consumer law.

The Attorney General's office enforces more than 25 consumer laws regarding advertising and business sales practices. To help businesses better understand these laws, the office's Consumer Protection Section offers a free workshop, "Supporting Ohio Small Businesses," on complying with Ohio consumer law and avoiding scams targeting small businesses.

Topics include advertising guidelines, cancellation rights of consumers, door-to-door sales, gift card requirements, and refund policies.

The office also provides a guide on "Complying with Ohio Consumer Law" and a list of Ohio consumer laws on its website.

To request a workshop for your business organization or to download educational resources, visit www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/BusinessServices or call 800-282-0515.

INTERNET SAFETY, *Continued*

steps to protect their children and to encourage safe Internet use:

- Talk to your child about online dangers and teach them about responsible use of online resources.
- Spend time with your child online. Ask to see your child's favorite websites.
- Keep the computer in a common room in the house. Make sure the screen is visible to you at all times.
- Utilize parental controls provided by your service provider and/or blocking software.
- Monitor your child's online use, especially on social networking sites or chat rooms.
- Randomly check your child's e-mail account.
- Find out what computer safeguards are utilized by your child's school, by your public library, and at the homes of your child's friends.
- Tell your child to never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone he or she met online and never to give out identifying information, such as name, home address, telephone number, or school name.

If you or your child receives harassing, intimidating, or pornographic communications, call your local law enforcement agency and contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at 800-843-5678.

WHAT IS YOUR SMARTPHONE SAYING ABOUT YOU?

If you use your smartphone to upload photos to social networking websites like Facebook or MySpace, your phone may be releasing your personal information and location without your knowledge.

For years, experts have warned web users to avoid posting too much personal information, such as street address, date of birth, or license plate numbers, to protect against online predators.

Now, even if you do not actively post information about your location on your profile, your smartphone may be releasing that information.

Most smartphones come equipped with GPS (Globe Positioning System) technology. This allows many smartphones the capability of geotagging your photos when you take them. The geotag data is then uploaded with your photos onto the social networks showing when and where the photo was taken.

If parents use their smartphones to post online photos of their children in various favorite spots, such as parks, schools, or bedrooms, an online stranger may be able to track those specific spots, just by checking the geotag information.

To protect yourself and your family, you can turn off the "location services" on your cell phone. This information is usually in your general phone settings. If you need assistance, call your service provider.

CAR BUYERS BEWARE, *Continued*

Patrol.

If a dealer knows that a vehicle previously was titled as a salvage vehicle (and is now a rebuilt salvage vehicle), then the dealer must disclose that information to the consumer. If the dealer does not know that the vehicle previously was titled as a salvage vehicle, then the dealer is not responsible for notifying the consumer.

Because dealers do not always know the history of the vehicles they sell, be sure to get a car inspected by an independent mechanic before you buy it.

Even if the dealer says that the car has been through a "50-point inspection" or "200-point inspection," do plenty of extra research.

Order a vehicle history report from the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles, and check other Internet-based vehicle history services. Have the car inspected by a trusted mechanic.

Also check the vehicle yourself for signs of water damage, such as:

- Stains and musty odors
- Mud or rust in places such as the trunk, glove compartment, or dashboard
- Electrical problems, such as an ignition that won't start, or lights that don't work
- Brittle wires

For additional information, contact the Ohio Attorney General's Office.

WANT UPDATES?

- Receive the Consumer Advocate via e-mail by signing up at www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/ConsumerAdvocate.
- Visit www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov for more information.