



Computer Safety Internet Safety

IT HAPPENED TO ME!

“I am one of those parents that was under the mistaken impression that I had this issue well under control at my house – until I found a file of a conversation my youngest daughter was having with someone she met on the internet.”



Everyone today wants to be connected; to family members, friends, work, school and sometimes strangers. This is what drives the digital world today. There are however many inherent risks. There are two golden rules to remember when you're on the net; nothing is private and everything is permanent.

GETTING TO KNOW THE NET

Surfing the net, like any other activity children and young adults may be engaged in, is an activity that should be supervised by parents and caregivers. To supervise effectively, parents need to be somewhat familiar with how the Internet works. The best way to learn is for a parent (or caregiver) to sit in front of a computer screen and simply start clicking.

CAN YOU TRUST THE INTERNET?

The internet is an “open source” information/communication tool. In other words anyone can post anything. Just because something is posted doesn't mean it's true. When sourcing information on the internet, best practice dictates you visit credible and/or a variety of web sites. E-mails can also spread disinformation. Before forwarding an e-mail with an “alarming” message, check the originator and ask yourself, “How do I know that the contents are factual?” If you are not confident, ignore the email and do not participate in forwarding it.

LURING

With the introduction of the internet, criminals now have a new way of finding victims. As of 2002 child luring is a criminal offence defined as; “electronic communication with a person believed to be a child (under 18) for the purpose of facilitating the commission of sexual offences.”

Most children participate in some form of a chat room and likewise, most children don't tell their parents about their internet experiences. Sexual predators, sometimes pretending to be a young person, surf chat rooms to target new victims.

(VIDEO) CHAT ROOMS

People frequently meet strangers in chat rooms who may represent themselves as someone they are not. This is frequently done with a sexual and/or criminal purpose in mind. Don't trust the identity of anyone you meet in a chat room and be extremely cautious about revealing any personal information. In a video chat room, the other party may be recording your image. Inappropriate images may come back to haunt you and cause embarrassment or jeopardize future

employment. Ask yourself, “Is this a picture or video of me I would show my family?”

CYBER STALKING / HARASSING E-MAILS

E-mails, like the telephone, can occasionally be harassing in nature. Cyber stalking often takes the form of harassing e-mails which commonly results from failed chat room encounters. If you are receiving harassing e-mails contact your internet service provider. If the e-mails are threatening or otherwise disturbing in nature, contact Police. Cyber stalking can also occur anonymously and surreptitiously. For example, spouses, partners and friends can monitor each other's activities in social networking sites like Facebook by checking who is on the other person's friends list and what they are saying.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT, PLEASE CONTACT:

PEEL REGIONAL POLICE
Crime Prevention Services
 7750 Hurontario Street
 Brampton, Ontario
 L6V 3W6

Tel. 905-453-2121 ext. 4021
 Fax 905-456-6106

You may also want to examine our Internet site at:

www.peelpolice.ca

INAPPROPRIATE VIDEO/PHOTO POSTINGS

One of the aspects of the internet is the opportunity to share information and post images. It is very easy to let your guard down, build a false sense of trust in the privacy of your home and forget that your screen is a portal for the world. Inappropriate videos shared with other users or posted on different web sites may lead to future embarrassment, disciplinary action (school or work) or criminal implications. Videos of a sexual nature or inappropriate opinions such as racial comments may violate the Human Rights Code or the Criminal Code of Canada, with serious consequences. The internet recognizes no political borders, however, Canada has reciprocal agreements with many countries. Internet use should be tempered with responsibility and respect.



TIPS FOR SAFE SURFING

Surfing the net has become a common and routine activity, providing opportunity for communication and fun. Good parenting practices are essential and no different on the internet than supervising children in any other activity. In order to protect children from harm on the internet, follow these simple rules:

- Get involved and communicate with your child.
- Become more computer literate and internet savvy yourself.
- Check out parental controls available on your online service.
- Keep the computer in a “public” area in your home.
- Monitor the amount of time your child spends on the internet, and at what times of day.
- Tell your children to never give out personal information, including name, address, school they attend or teachers’ names, parents’ names, etc.
- Do not allow your child to use a web cam, digital camera, or video camera without your very close supervision.
- Regularly search the internet “history” on every computer with internet access in your home, and don’t be hesitant to question the parents of other children your child may visit.
- Very closely monitor chat rooms your child may visit.
- Letting children use the internet unattended, particularly talking in chat rooms, is the equivalent of dropping them off downtown at 10:00 p.m. and saying, “go make some new friends.”

CYBER-BULLYING

Cyber-bullying is an extension of bullying. Cyber-bullying is wilful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text. Mediums include both the computer and the cellphone.

Cyber-bullying can range from nasty text messages, to ugly e-mails, hacking into e-mail accounts and posting false messages or altered images. Cyber-bullying is invasive and it can be received even in the comfort of your own home. To a youth or a young person, Cyber-bullying may seem inescapable. The effects of cyber-bullying can be far reaching and include emotional, psychological, social, criminal and financial implications (civil litigation.) Cyber-bullying can have serious effects on a young person as it may affect their day to day routine, interfere with school and sometimes can end with tragic consequences such as suicide or homicide. Some cyber-bullying can be criminal in nature, such as criminal harassment, threatening, intimidation and defamatory libel. If it’s school related, cyber-bullying is an offence under the Ontario Education Act and can lead to suspension or expulsion.

IF YOU ARE CYBER-BULLIED

- Don’t respond to messages that are mean to you or your friends.
- Don’t forward e-mails or messages that are mean or spread rumours about other people.
- Don’t open e-mails or messages from someone you know is a bully.
- Block anyone who acts like a cyber-bully.
- Save or print all messages from a bully for the purpose of documenting behaviour and future evidence.
- Tell someone. In cases of a youth, tell a parent or another trusted adult.
- If it appears criminal in nature or you’re not sure, call police.
- **SAVE, BLOCK & REPORT**

TIPS FOR SAFE SOCIAL NETWORKING

One of the most popular activities on the internet is joining social networking sites. These sites provide opportunity to conduct many types of activities including communication and information sharing.

- Think about which site you want to use. Some sites will allow you to restrict users who access posted content; others allow anyone and everyone to view your postings.
- Read the “Terms of Use.” When you tick off the “I Agree” box, you are in effect entering into a contract. Terms of Use will tell you how some of the information you are posting may be used by the host, such as sharing it with advertisers.
- Keep control over the information you post. Use privacy controls to restrict access to you page. Allow access only to friends, your club, your team, your community group, or your family.
- Limit the information about yourself. Keep your personal information in your profile to a minimum. Don’t post personal information like your full name, address, phone number, or any kind of financial or personal information such as your SIN #, bank and/or credit card account numbers. Be cautious about information that can be used to identify you or locate you offline.
- Use a screen name that doesn’t say much about you. Don’t use your real name, your age, year of birth, or your hometown. Don’t use a screen name that may attract undesirable people. Even if you think your screen name makes you anonymous, it may take very little effort to scan clues and figure out who you are and where you live or can be found.
- Post only information that you are comfortable with others knowing about you. Anyone can see your page, including your employer, your parents, your teachers, the police, your school or the job you might want to apply for in five years.
- Don’t post personal photos. They can be altered and used in ways you didn’t anticipate. If you do post photos, ask yourself whether it’s one your family would proudly display in their home for their friends to see.
- Don’t flirt with on-line strangers. Some people lie about who they are and their intentions, you never really know who you’re dealing with. Flirting with strangers on-line could lead to serious consequences.
- Be wary if a new online friend wants to meet you in person. Before you decide to meet someone, do your homework; ask whether any of your friends knows the person, and see what information you can find through online search engines. If

you decide to meet them, meet in a public place, during the day, with someone you trust. Tell someone where you’re going, and when you expect to be back.

- You can’t take it back. Even if you delete the information from your page, it’s still out there; on other people’s computers.
- Go with your gut feeling. If you feel uncomfortable or threatened because of something directed at you online, tell an adult you trust and/or report it to the police and the social networking site. You could be preventing yourself or someone else from becoming a victim.
- Remember, if you’re not willing to shout out information about you from the top of the City Hall in your hometown, then don’t post it.

INTERNET ADDICTION

With the advent of modern technology, many young people are spending more and more time in front of a screen; computer, television, cell phone, hand held games and other devices. This means they are less active and getting less exercise. Recent Canadian studies show an epidemic of inactivity due to screen addiction resulting in obesity. This epidemic may be the result of an infinite desire to stay connected or preoccupation with numerous games and endless levels. Some youth are going to bed with their cell phone under the pillow, on vibrate, just so they don’t miss that “important” text message at 3:00 o’clock in the morning.

Here are a few, simple rules to help children and youth maintain a safe and balanced relationship with the screen:

- No screens (television or computer) in the bedroom. Often youth get up after parents have gone to sleep and get on the net to chat or surf.
- No hand held devices in the bedroom at sleep time. No cell phone, no PSP, no i-pod. These are disruptive devices and will not help your child get adequate rest so that they may be rested and ready to learn the next day.
- Limit the amount of time spent in front of a screen. Write a “contract” with your child and agree on the terms and consequences. For example, limit computer use/internet access to one hour each weekday, except for school related work.
- Ensure your children get adequate exercise. Encourage your children to go outside for play, join sports teams or cycling. Not only will they get exercise, but they will also socialize. When possible participate with your child and lead by example.

