



Edina Police Department

Technical Brief

31.0

INTERNET SAFETY TIPS for PARENTS

The World Wide Web can provide an effective means of communicating, can be a useful educational tool or a convenient access to shopping. Most of the time, it is a helpful device and most Internet users behave in a responsible manner. However, not all people and not all information on the Internet are reliable or even safe.

The University of New Hampshire conducted a national survey which examined the Internet activity and experience of those youth (ages 10 to 17) who use the Internet regularly (more than once a month). Results published in June, 2000, showed that one in five regular young users had received an unwanted sexual solicitation in the previous year and more than half of these incidents were not reported to parents.

The following ideas will help you protect your children from potential Internet hazards:

- It is easier to monitor the use of a computer if you keep it in an open, frequently used room like the family room or kitchen, rather than a more private or secluded area such as a child's bedroom.
- Decide how much time your child may spend on the Internet and/or playing computer games, just as you would set limits on TV viewing. Make sure that "surfing" the Net doesn't take the place of social interaction, homework or other important activities.
- View appropriate sites with your child and make a list of or "bookmark" those family oriented or educational sites where he is allowed to go. Frequently sit down with your child and let him show you what he's learned and where he goes.
- Activate the parental control features that are offered by some online services and/or buy blocking software. However, don't rely entirely on these devices. Nothing takes the place of parental awareness; it is very easy to fall or be led into inappropriate or even pornographic sites.
- Teach your children that they should never give out any personal information (including the name or location of their school, their phone number or address, photos, friends' names, etc.) and never agree to meet anyone with whom they've been "chatting". Tell them to come to you if they receive any messages that are mean or confusing or make them feel uncomfortable.

- Not all offensive material on the Internet is illegal but child pornography *is* illegal. If you receive any child pornography, immediately contact the Edina Police Department.

- Ask about the computer use policy in place at your child's school. Be sure your child understands it and that it meets your own standards.

- Periodically review your family computer rules and discuss issues such as privacy, trust, pornography, chat rooms, etc. Open, honest communication about the dangers of the Internet and how to handle different situations will help your child make healthy decisions.

- Resources for more information include :

F.B.I. Office of Crimes Against Children
935 Pennsylvania Av., NW
Washington, DC 20535
(202) 324-3666
<http://www.fbi.gov/kids/k5th/safety2.htm>

U.S. Department of Justice
<http://www.cybercrime.gov/>

Nat'l Center for Missing and Exploited Children
www.missingkids.com
1-800-THE-LOST

U.S. Department of Education
www.ed.gov

Federal Trade Commission
<http://www.ftc.gov/infosecurity/>

Nat'l Parent Teacher Association
www.pta.org

If you have any questions about this information, or other safety concerns,
call Crime Prevention, **Edina Police Department, (952) 826-1610.**