

Tips to Prevent Computer Fraud

Computer fraud is growing in frequency and sophistication every day. Through the extensive coverage of the Internet, identity thieves and other criminals are reaching across states, countries and continents to fraudulently obtain personally identifiable information about individuals and businesses. There are, however, a number of ways to avoid becoming a victim of fraud on your computer.

Email Precautions:

- **If you receive emails from senders you don't know, delete them immediately** without opening them and do not reply to unsubscribe as this can tip off phishers that they have reached a valid email address.
- **If you get any type of unsolicited email or pop-up message that asks for any type of personal information, don't respond** to it and notify your Internet Service Provider (ISP) immediately.
- **Never send personal or sensitive business information via unsecured email.** Any information sent through unsecured email messages may be intercepted and stolen.

Online Precautions:

- **Install and keep anti-virus/anti-spyware software on your computer updated.**
- Do business only with reputable online firms.
- Don't keep personal or business information, passwords or account numbers online or on websites.
- If you are conducting any type of business online, make sure you are doing so on a secure web connection. If you see the characters `https://` in the web page address in your browser, you are visiting a secure website that uses encryption to protect your identity and your information. If you only see `http://`, don't enter any personal information because the page is not a protected web site and could be intercepted during transmission.
- **Know who you are dealing with online.** Don't complete forms that ask for personal information if you don't know exactly where they are going and what they will be used for. Review the Web site privacy policies of sites with which you deal.
- If you bank online, make sure you stay at your computer for the entire transaction, and then be sure you **sign off completely** when you are done.
- Ask to **have your account and credit card statements sent to you online** directly from your bank or credit card company.