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Simple Steps to Online Safety
October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month in Wisconsin

(MADISON) – Growing up, your parents taught you about good hygiene - wash your hands, brush your teeth, and take a shower. As we continue to rely upon computers and mobile devices, we need to also practice cyber hygiene, to protect our devices from cyber criminals. That's why Governor Walker has declared October as Cybersecurity Awareness Month in Wisconsin.

"Whether banking, shopping, social networking, or downloading the latest app - practicing good cyber hygiene is critical," says Major General Don Dunbar, Adjutant General and Wisconsin's Homeland Security Advisor. "All of us must learn how to stay more secure and mitigate risk in our ever-expanding digital lives."

This includes preventing and responding to identity theft and scams, ensuring that home networks are secure, managing the security of mobile devices and teaching children to use the Internet safely. Here are some simple ways to practice good cyber hygiene:

Keep a Clean Machine:
- **Keep security software current:** Having the latest security software, web browser and operating systems are the best defense against viruses, malware and other online threats.

- **Automate software updates:** Many software programs will automatically connect and update to defend against known risks. Turn on automatic updates if that's an available option.

- **Protect all devices that connect to the Internet:** Computers, smartphones, gaming systems and other web-enabled devices also need protection from viruses and malware.

- **Plug & scan:** USBs and other external devices can be infected by viruses and malware. Use your security software to scan them.

Protect Personal Information:
- **Make your password a sentence**: A strong password is a sentence that is at least 12 characters long. Focus on positive sentences or phrases that you like to think about and are easy to remember (for example, "I love country music.").

- **Unique account, unique password**: Having separate passwords for every account helps to thwart cybercriminals. At a minimum, separate your work and personal accounts and make

sure your critical accounts have the strongest passwords.

- **Write it down and keep it safe**: Everyone can forget a password. Keep a list that's stored in a safe, secure place away from your computer. Consider using a password manager to keep track of your passwords.

- **Get two steps ahead:** Turn on two-step authentication – also known as two-step verification or multi-factor authentication – on accounts where available. Two-factor authentication can use anything from a text message to your phone or a biometric like your fingerprint to provide enhanced account security.

Connect With Care:
- **When in doubt, throw it out**: Links in emails, social media posts and online advertising are often how cybercriminals try to steal your personal information. Even if you know the source, if something looks suspicious, delete it.

- **Get savvy about Wi-Fi hotspots:** Limit the type of business you conduct and adjust the security settings on your device to limit who can access your machine.

- **Protect your $$:** When banking and shopping, check to be sure the site is security enabled. Look for web addresses with "https://" or "shttp://," which means the site takes extra measures to help secure your information. "http://" is not secure.

Be Web Wise:
- **Stay current:** Keep pace with new ways to stay safe online.

- **Think before you act**: Be wary of communications that implore you to act immediately, offer something that sounds too good to be true or ask for personal information.

- **Back it up:** Protect your valuable work, music, photos and other digital information by making an electronic copy and storing it safely.

Be Your Online Guardian:
- **Personal information is like money.** Information such as your purchase history or location, has value – just like money. Be thoughtful about who gets that information and how it's collected through apps and websites.

- **Be aware of what's being shared**: Set the privacy and security settings on web services and devices to your comfort level for information sharing.

- **Share with care**: Think before posting about yourself and others online. Consider what a post reveals, who might see it and how it could be perceived now and in the future.

This October, ReadyWisconsin will highlight efforts to keep everyone in Wisconsin safe from cybercrime. Visit http://readywisconsin.wi.gov for more information. You can also follow us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

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