

NEWS FROM SCDCA

South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs



Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston, Administrator

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONSUMERS ENCOURAGED TO PROTECT THEIR PRIVACY ONLINE



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AT&T, iKeepSafe and the SC Department of Consumer Affairs Recognize National Data Privacy Day by Providing Consumer Tips on How to Protect Your Privacy Online

COLUMBIA, S.C., Jan. 28, 2010 — The Internet offers an exciting world of information and entertainment at the click of a mouse. Consumers are spending hours surfing, shopping, playing games and communicating online, but as with any activity, it is important to put security, privacy and safety first. As U.S. businesses and consumers mark January 28, 2010 as National Data Privacy Day, consumers are encouraged to examine how they currently protect themselves online, and what steps they can take to ensure their privacy is secure when connecting through a mobile device, home broadband or any other Internet connection.

“While the Internet brings many opportunities for education, commerce and social interaction, it also brings risks such as identity theft,” said Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston, Administrator, S.C. Department of Consumer Affairs. “Consumers must be continually vigilant in guarding information and protecting

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Established by the Consumer Protection code in 1974, The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs represents the interests of South Carolina Consumers. Our mission is to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, mediation, enforcement and education.

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themselves against online dangers. Educating themselves about cyber security can help consumers have a positive Internet experience.”

AT&T, iKeepSafe and the SC Department of Consumer Affairs offer the following important tips for consumers to use to determine how best to protect their privacy online:

What happens online stays online...forever. The Internet helps us enhance our social and civic lives. As you post the picture from spring break, or share your most intimate details or views, remember many Websites and social networks are public, and information posted online is often permanent and searchable.

Know with whom you are sharing information online. Social media sites, chat rooms and other online forums can be anonymous, and some people may be pretending to be someone they are not. Be as suspicious of a stranger online as you are of strangers in public places.

Review privacy policies, privacy settings and profile preferences. Be cautious of giving out personal information, particularly your Social Security number and names of family members, unless you are familiar with the company and its Web site privacy policy. Many companies, like AT&T, have made it easier to understand their policies.

Keep virus and spyware protection up to date and in place. Computer viruses often look like something they are not – such as a picture, screen saver or even a Web link. Some spyware programs can track everything you do online and send this information to an unauthorized user, leaving you vulnerable to identity theft. Antivirus and spyware protection programs scan and monitor your computer for viruses and spyware and then alert you before damage occurs. AT&T offers its broadband customers the award-winning AT&T Internet Security Suite powered by McAfee®, which offers protection on up to 10 PCs and is included with qualifying plans.

Avoid sending sensitive personal data over public connections. Be aware that many public computers, such as those at the library, and unsecured Wi-Fi connections can enable other users nearby to capture the information you are sending or receiving. If you have to use an unsecured or public connection, make sure the site is secure. The AT&T Wi-Fi network supports secure Virtual Private Network (VPN) access. If you have VPN, AT&T recommends that you connect through it for optimum security.

Never respond to emails or pop-ups asking for personal data or passwords. Use filtering software to help block unwanted e-mail and to reduce the likelihood of receiving viruses and spyware from unknown senders. Also use pop-up and ad-blocking features that let you control the quantity and type of pop-ups you receive or to block them completely.

Use a strong password for all devices and accounts. Use combinations of letters, numbers, upper and lower case characters, and symbols in your passwords, and change your passwords frequently.

Find websites on your own; don't use links in emails or on other sites. "Phishing," also known as "brand spoofing" or "carding," is a trick Internet scammers use to "fish" for consumers' financial information and password data using fake company e-mails and Web sites. Many companies, like AT&T, will not send e-mail requests to customers asking for personal account or credit card information. Instead of clicking the link in the e-mail, go to the site directly from your browser or search engine.

Look for signs that a Website is secure before sending financial or personal data. Secure sites will often show a "lock" icon or there will be an "s" after the "http" ("https://"). If you don't see these indications, then the site is probably not secure and you should carefully consider whether to send personal or financial data over the site.

Talk to your kids, teens, and tweens. Teach children to never share their name, address, phone number, school name or any other personal information about their family while online.

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Use the parental control tools available to make your job easier. Parental controls, such as AT&T's Smart Limits, enable you to establish sensible boundaries around the technology your family uses on a daily basis and to determine how and when your children can use their phone, computer or other connected device.

"We commend the work of the Department of Consumer affairs and leaders across South Carolina who work every day to help keep consumers safe online," said Pamela Lackey, President, AT&T South Carolina. "At AT&T, we are dedicated to promoting online safety awareness and education and providing our customers with the necessary tools to be safe and responsible digital citizens."

Last year, AT&T announced its support with the American School Counselor Association of iKeepSafe's [Project PRO](#), an effort to teach students how to protect their privacy and reputation online. Project PRO enables school counselors, parents and teens to become an active part in managing a student's digital reputation through innovative educational resources such as video clips and training documents. To date, more than 4,200 educators and counselors throughout the country have sought out the curriculum.

"The Internet Keep Safe Coalition is thrilled to work with the Department of Consumer Affairs and AT&T in commemoration of Data Privacy Day, and to join the effort in helping to raise awareness and educate the public on data safeguards," said iKeepSafe President Marsali Hancock. "We applaud the Department's efforts to expand awareness about the need to protect your security, privacy and safety to families nationwide. Let this Day serve as a catalyst for all of us to improve the way we manage our personal privacy online."

To help consumers have a safer online experience, AT&T offers a full library of supportive Internet safety and security tips and interactive safety games for children, all available at <http://www.att.com/safety>. Consumers may call the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs toll-free at 1.800.922.1594 or visit www.sccoconsumer.gov for more information on the state's Financial Identity Fraud and Identity Theft Protection Act that offers greater protection against identity theft for South Carolina residents.

Find More Information Online:

Web Site Links: AT&T Web Site AT&T Corporate Social Responsibility iKeepSafe Website AT&T Consumer Safety OnGuardOnline.gov Staysafeonline.org	Related Media Kits:
Related Releases:	Related Fact Sheets:

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About SCDCA

The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs is a state government agency that works to ensure a fair and equitable marketplace for consumers. Our mission is to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, mediation, enforcement and education. The Department strives to be a credit to South Carolina by holding the following values as essential in relationships and decision-making: competence, respect, equality, dedication, integrity, and timeliness.