State of West Virginia

Monthly Cyber Security Tips
NEWSLETTER

February 2011   Volume 6, Issue 2

Cyber Ethics

From the Desk of the West Virginia Office of Information Security and Controls – Jim Richards, Director
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The explosion of social networking and the ubiquitous sharing and posting of so much information online have changed the way we communicate. We must ensure that users understand their responsibilities for conducting themselves online. An important component of that is Cyber Ethics. Cyber Ethics refers to the code of responsible behavior on the Internet. We should all employ the basic tenets of Cyber Ethics to be good "cyber citizens."

Who Should Be Concerned About Cyber Ethics?

Cyber ethics must be taught and reinforced at every level of computer use—from the novice user just learning to navigate a computer and the Internet, to an information professional whose job requires significant use of online resources. In the same way that each culture teaches its citizens the ethics of business, education, government, etc., those who use the Internet must be taught ethical practices in every aspect of its use.

Why Should We Be Concerned About Cyber Ethics?

The power of the Internet means that anyone can communicate at anytime, with anyone, anywhere. While this has undeniable benefits, there can also be negative consequences. Anonymous posting to blogs, websites and social media can encourage bad behavior by eliminating the need to stand behind the words used.

A significant issue of increasing concern is cyber bullying.   What were once comments confined to the school yard or hallways are now magnified by the power and anonymity of the Internet. Developments in electronic media offer new forums for bullies, and the actions can range in severity from cruel or embarrassing rumors to threats, harassment, or stalking. The effects can be far-reaching and long lasting.

What Are The Rules Of Ethical Cyber Activity?

The basic rule is do not do something in cyber space that you would consider wrong or illegal in everyday life.

When determining responsible behaviors, consider the following:

- Do not use rude or offensive language.
- Don't be a bully on the Internet. Do not call people names, lie about them, send embarrassing pictures of them, or do anything else to try to hurt them.
- Do not copy information from the Internet and claim it as yours.
- Adhere to copyright restrictions when downloading material, including software, games, movies, or music from the Internet.
- Do not break into someone else's computer.
- Do not use someone else's password.
- Do not attempt to infect or in any way try to make someone else's computer unusable.

We were taught the rules of "right and wrong" growing up. We just need to apply the same rules to cyber space!

Resources For More Information

Computer Crime & Intellectual Property Section -- United States Department of Justice
http://www.justice.gov/criminal/cybercrime/cyberethics.htm

Microsoft Safety & Security Center
http://www.microsoft.com/security/online-privacy/cyberethics-practice.aspx

Cyberbullying Prevention Lessons- NCSA and CyberSmart!
http://cybersmartcurriculum.org/cyberbullying/ncsa/

Teaching your children acceptable behavior on the Internet
http://us.norton.com/library/familyresource/article.jsp?aid=pr_cyberethics

Cyber Citizen Partnership
http://www.cybercitizenship.org/

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