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NEWS RELEASE

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Tips to Help You Stay Safe Online

Boise, Idaho . . . As a result of the pandemic and its aftermath many Idahoans are relying on their phones, laptops and other devices more than ever for work, school, and to stay connected. This increase in online activity corresponds with greater consumer exposure to cyber-attacks and scammers seeking to exploit victims. Consider these five tips to stay safe online.

Clear out your cyber clutter

Think of this as spring cleaning for your digital space. A good digital spring cleaning can prevent cyber criminals from accessing old information that could help them figure out how to get to your new information. To clean up files stored on your devices, first back up important files and then delete unused or outdated files. Empty your desktop recycling bin to help permanently remove deleted files.

Update your logins and passwords

Opting for the same password for multiple applications makes it easier for a scammer to access your information. Instead, choose a unique password, preferably eight characters or longer that does not contain personal information or common words. An easy way to double your login protection is to enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) whenever possible. Review the privacy and security options each platform provides to prevent granting access to unwanted visitors.

If you connect, you must protect

One of the best defenses against viruses and malware is to update your software, web browser, and operating systems. If you are using old versions of these apps it is more likely there will be bugs that can leave your devices vulnerable. Keep your information safe by turning on automatic updates so you don't have to think about it, and set your security software to run regular scans.

Think before clicking

Phishing is a type of online scam where criminals impersonate legitimate organizations to steal sensitive information. To avoid phishing scams, do not click on links or open emails or attachments from unknown sources. Also look at the way the message is written – often there are typos or the

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language used sounds off. If the message appears to be from an organization you know, but you are unsure it's authentic, contact the organization through its official website and do not open any links in the email.

Protect yourself from tech support scams

A tech support scam is designed to alert you to a serious problem with your computer that does not exist, and the perpetrator will request payment to provide a fix. If you get a pop-up message on your computer, a call, a spam email or another "urgent message" about a virus on your computer do not click on any links or call a phone number. Do not send money to fix the problem, this includes paying with giftcards, money transfers, or providing personal bank or credit card information. Lastly, do not give anyone control of your computer. Legitimate local repair businesses can help if there truly is an issue.

For additional resources related to staying safe online, visit the Idaho Department of Finance website at <https://www.finance.idaho.gov/consumer/cybersecurity/> or visit the National Cyber Security Alliance online at <https://staysafeonline.org/>.

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Department of Finance Press Releases and other information can be found on the Internet at <http://finance.idaho.gov> and may be obtained by contacting the department at (208) 332-8000 or Idaho toll-free at 1-888-346-3378.