

SAFETY BULLETIN

Spotlight on Internet Safety | Issue 5

In the News...

Approximately 1 in 7 youth Internet users received unwanted sexual solicitations or approaches in the past year.

Finkelhor, Mitchell, Wolak "Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later" (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children 2006)

In summer 2005, a 16-year-old congressional page received inappropriate e-mails and instant messages from U.S. Congressman Mark Foley. The boy's family contacted their congressman and asked that the communications between Foley and their son stop, but to protect their son's privacy that no further action be taken. Investigators found Foley had been sending inappropriate communications to juvenile pages since 1997.

School officials did not renew the contract of a 28-year-old female teacher after they were anonymously informed that she had links to more than 100 under-age boy "friends" on her MySpace.com account. The next year an all-male college-prep high school hired her after receiving a neutral reference from her previous school's principal.

While completing a routine foster home visit, a caseworker discovered links to pornographic and mate-swapping Web sites on the computer used by the foster children. The children disclosed that their foster father showed them how to access the sites and they viewed them together.

As parents were monitoring their 15-year-old daughter's computer use, they found photos of her engaging in sexual activities with an adult male on the Web site "lastnightsparty.com." Police charged the man, a girl's junior high basketball coach, with statutory rape.



Safety Tips for employers

1. Develop policies that govern electronic communication between employees or volunteers and youths.
2. Require that e-mails between employees and minors be sent to a third party such as the employee's supervisor, the host organization, or the minors' parents.
3. Advise employees they may not communicate with youths from work via MySpace.com or other social sites.
4. Establish specific protocols for responding to reports of inappropriate employee conduct and stick to them.
5. Don't be dissuaded from following your protocols regardless of who asks.
5. Develop policies that dictate acceptable Internet, instant message, and e-mail use on company equipment or grounds.
6. Advise employees that e-mail correspondence and Internet activity will be monitored. Periodically check to see what Web sites have been visited.
7. Use monitoring, filtering, and blocking programs on company equipment.

SAFETY BULLETIN

Safety Tips for parents

1. Talk to your child about Internet safety and establish family rules about using the Internet.
2. Monitor your child's Internet use. Know who he or she talks to online and what they talk about.
3. Periodically ask your child if he has received any inappropriate e-mails or pop-ups and prepare how you will respond.
4. Teach your children about physical, emotional, and behavioral boundaries. Help them set "online" boundaries.

Use Technology for Safety

Companies can use technology to help achieve their mission of abuse prevention. A comprehensive safety process includes the use of monitoring software, and blocking and filtering software. Here's how to make technology work for your company!

We recently created a company policy to begin monitoring employee computer use on company machines. How can we get started? You can purchase software that will record Internet activity either on the company's network or an individual computer. Monitoring software is relatively inexpensive to purchase. The software records computer activity by taking snapshots of the user's Internet browser, actively recording all browsing activity, or creating a record of URLs with time- and date-stamps.

We have a "firewall." Is that useful in blocking sites? Sure, a firewall (both hardware- and software-based) is a common way for companies to protect their company computer network from virus attack, but it is frequently used as a way to restrict Internet access.

How are filtering and blocking software different? Filtering software uses keyword filters to block Web sites containing specified keywords used alone or in context with other keywords. Blocking software uses a "restricted site list" to block access to specific Web sites. Many blocking software programs allow you to customize the restricted list by adding the sites you choose. Restricted site lists must be updated regularly.

How can we adjust search engine settings to block unsuitable results? Most search engines allow you to block search results that are unsuitable for children or work environments. Blocking inappropriate search results greatly reduces the chance of stumbling across objectionable material on the Internet. For instance, on the computers in your computer lab, go to google.com/preferences and select "Use Strict Filtering" from the SafeSearch menu options. Yahoo.com and Ask.com offer kid-safe search engines you can use in your schools or foster homes: AskForKids.com and Yahooligans.yahoo.com.



SAFETY BULLETIN

Child Molester Chats

Pedophiles don't only use the Internet to lure victims. They also use it to chat about jobs and companies where they can gain access to children. The following postings are from Web sites that cater to adults with inappropriate interests in children:



"Wore my 'Sex & the City' heels to school today. As I walked around my classroom, all the boys were checkin' out my legs."

"Local church camping event this weekend! I'm really excited! I'm assisting with the Children's Ministry!"

"All the boys I tutor go barefoot. And then sit & play with their toes the whole time we work together. Sometimes I ask them to show me things. I promise not to laugh."

"Luv patting the girls on the butt when they win a track meet. They are so in shape! Luv their rock hard legs."

"How do I get strange kids to sit on my lap?" "Become a shopping mall Santa."

"When they come out to do the home interview, make sure you have a Bible in sight and don't tell them about any other volunteer work you do with kidz or they will get suspicious."

Internet Stats...

Social networking sites like MySpace.com and Facebook.com have gained popularity with pre-teens, teens, and young adults. Because so many of our youths traffic these sites, they have become a breeding ground for exploitation.

- Over 3.5 million child pornography images have been identified by U.S. law enforcement.
- Almost half of those arrested for possession of child pornography had sexually victimized children.
- More than one-third of youths use the Internet to chat, e-mail, or IM people they do not know in person.
- More than one-third of youth Internet users have had unwanted exposure to sexual material.
- Almost one in ten youth Internet users have been harassed online.
- Internet child pornography has been estimated to be as high as a \$20 billion business worldwide.

Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 2006



What's New...

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- *How to screen your employees and volunteers*
- *How to identify risks in programs*
- *What to do about suspicious interactions between an employee and a child*

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