

The internet is an efficient way to distribute and gather information globally, but can involve risk of online scams and other related criminal activity. You can minimize your risk if you follow a few basic safeguards.

Online dating involves risk both online and ultimately, in person. Follow our safety tips for navigating these new relationships.

BE AWARE and stay safe in your contact with strangers whether in person or online.

For more information:

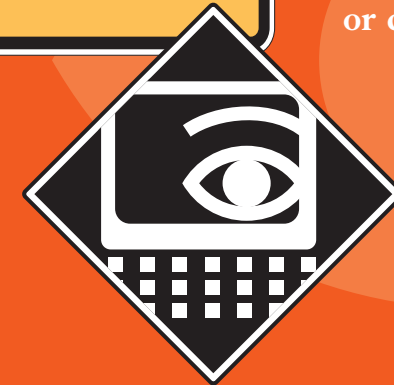
City of West Hollywood Public Safety Division:
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City of West Hollywood
California 1984
A project of the Public Safety Commission

www.weho.org



Internet Safety

Safeguard yourself
against
the internet and
online relationships
involving personal risk
or criminal activity.

Internet safety tips:

- ✓ **Consumers need to remember that even though something is on the internet**, it may not be legitimate – no matter how impressive or professional the website may appear.
- ✓ **Do NOT provide ANY personal/financial information**, account passwords, PIN numbers, etc. to anyone online or over the phone unless you can verify the legitimacy of the request.
- ✓ **Be especially careful about communications with strangers.** Do NOT respond to unsolicited e-mails, IMs, text messages, or phone calls from sources that are unknown to you.
- ✓ **Keep your operating system, anti-virus software, and anti-spyware and firewall software up to date.**
- ✓ **Use anti-virus software and/or firewalls on every computer you own/use.**

- ✓ **Be careful about giving out valuable personal data online – and offline.** Sharing photos or personal details may cause you problems later on.
- ✓ **Although it may be fun to meet new people** for friendship, romance or business – be aware that while most people are friendly and harmless, others behave in a friendly manner but have ulterior motives.
- ✓ **If you are planning on getting together with a potential buyer or seller**, get a phone number, tell a family member or friend where you will be meeting, and/or let them tag along.
- ✓ **If you have scheduled a home delivery or pick up**, ask someone to be there with you. If they were not invited or scheduled to make a call, do not open your front door, and NEVER let them in to your home.

Online-dating service and chat room safety tips:

- ✓ **Find a reputable online dating service.**
- ✓ **Choose a non-identifiable screen name** (keep it clean to avoid the wrong sort of attention).
- ✓ **Do not believe everything you read online!**
- ✓ **When you are ready to chat** outside of the dating site, use a separate e-mail and IM account for online communications.
- ✓ **You may feel as if you really know your new cyber-date**, but don't be in a rush, or let them rush you to meet offline.
- ✓ **When you are ready to take things a step further**, start with a telephone call.
- ✓ **When you do meet**, do it in a very public place, preferably with a friend or family member. If you go alone, make sure someone knows where you are meeting.
- ✓ **After your first meeting**, it is not advisable to go home with your date or to invite them to your home.
- ✓ **Should you decide to go home with someone** after the first meeting, let someone know who you are meeting and where the meeting will take place. If things go wrong, don't be embarrassed to go to the police.
- ✓ **Save copies of your online dating conversations.**