

SPOTLIGHT: SMARTPHONE SAFETY

DON'T LET ID THIEVES ACCESS YOUR DATA



Smartphones have become an extension of ourselves. Virtually anything can be done with them, from social networking to paying bills or shopping. But beware smartphone addicts! These “mini computers” are often the weakest link in the chain of cyber security, making them an easy target for hackers and ID thieves. Think you’re not at risk? Think again! Below are some common threats to your personal information:

- 1 Public WiFi.** We all take advantage of WiFi, it’s usually FREE and cuts down on data plan usage. But smartphones are vulnerable to malware and hacking when connected to unsecured public networks. Even though it’s free, it could end up costing you in the long run!
- 2 TMI (Too Much Information).** Smartphones let us share every event of our day with others—but there is such a thing as oversharing!
- 3 Phishing.** That’s right, with a Ph! An incoming text or e-mail may be an attempt to gain access to your information. For example, text messages saying “you’ve won a \$1000 gift card” from a well-known retailer... all you have to do is click on the imbedded link to redeem it. Don’t do it! Clicking on suspicious links can download viruses and key-loggers onto your smartphone, same with your laptop or desktop computer.

Now you know the risks, but before we send you into panic mode, you should also know there are ways to protect yourself (or your phone). Here are some simple steps that can save you a lot of trouble:

- 1 Protect Your Device.** Use strong, creative passwords and don’t share them with anyone. You should also use up to date anti-virus software designed for your smartphone. Many of these apps are even free!
- 2 Disable Bluetooth When Not in Use.** Bluetooth can allow others in close proximity to intercept your conversations. So, be mindful when making a financial transaction or sharing other sensitive information with your hands free devices.
- 3 Securely Dispose of Your Device.** Eligible for an awesome upgrade!?! Before you turn that old smartphone in, make sure you erase important information and remove any SD cards.

For more information on protecting yourself from identity theft, visit www.consumer.sc.gov and click Identity Theft Resources.



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