Staying Safe on Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites continue to increase in popularity, with Facebook, the number one site, reporting that it has more than 400 million users worldwide. Some social networking sites are purely social, allowing users to establish friendships, play games and share news, profiles, pictures, music and videos. Other sites focus on finding romantic relationships, making business connections or reviewing local businesses.

How can you protect yourself?

Social networking sites are fun and user-friendly, but they can pose a risk.

> **Limit your personal information.** Do not post your address, your schedule or routine. If others post information about you, make sure the combined information is not more than you would be comfortable with strangers knowing.

> **Only post information you are comfortable with anyone seeing.** Once you post information online, you cannot retract it. Even if you remove it from a site, saved or cached versions may still exist on other people's machines.

> **Be wary of strangers.** The Internet makes it easy for people to misrepresent themselves. If you interact with people you do not know, be cautious about the information you reveal or agreeing to meet them in person.

> **Be skeptical and do not believe everything you read online.** People may post false or misleading information about various topics, including their own identities. This is not necessarily done with malicious intent; it could be unintentional, an exaggeration or a joke.

> **Use privacy settings.** You can customize your settings to restrict access to only certain people. However, there is a risk that even this private information could be exposed, so do not post anything that you would not want the public to see. Be cautious when deciding which applications to enable, and check to see what information the applications will be able to access.

> **Protect your account with passwords that cannot easily be guessed.** If your password is compromised, someone may be able to access your account and pretend to be you.

> **Check privacy policies.** Some sites may share information such as e-mail addresses or user preferences with other companies. This may lead to an increase in spam.

> **Use anti-virus software.** It recognizes most known viruses and protects your computer against them, so you may be able to detect and remove the virus before it can do any damage. Because attackers are continually writing new viruses, be sure to keep your software up-to-date.

Additional Information

This information is brought to you by ComPsych® GuidanceResources®. This company-sponsored benefit offers confidential help and support 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, at no cost to you or your immediate family. Our Guidance

Consultants can assist you with your concerns at: **877-627-4239**
Online: **www.guidanceresources.com** Enter your company ID: **MAP_4_IBEW**