

Cyber safety tips to protect you and your real estate business

We've talked about personal safety; now let's talk about online safety. Real estate professionals deal with large sums of money on a routine basis and, just like retailers, they can get hacked, too. Here are some online safety tips to keep in mind to protect your livelihood and bank account:

- **Be careful with Wi-Fi:** Putting passwords on your office Wi-Fi goes without saying, but public Wi-Fi's poses a different problem. While getting work done at a coffee shop or other public places is routine, hackers can use these public places to steal information. Because public Wi-Fi connections are usually not encrypted, you are at risk for a data breach. Don't use work devices on public, unsecured Wi-Fi.
- **When in doubt, don't click or open links and emails that look fishy.** Scammers use intriguing or mysterious messages to get into your systems and steal info, like client data.
- **Put it away:** Don't leave contracts and valuable client info lying around the office. The information does not have to be in a digital format to be leaked, especially if you work in an office with a lot of traffic or sharing an office space with multiple businesses.
- **Shield your computer from e-mail viruses:** Computer viruses can impair and seriously damage your computer. Viruses are often distributed via attachments in e-mail spam. Never open an attachment from someone you don't know, and, if you receive a strange or impersonal-sounding message from a familiar address, check with that person to make sure that they really sent it.
- **Shop online safely:** When shopping online, check out a website before entering your credit card number or other personal information. Enter this information only on secure web pages with addresses that start with "https" and have a closed padlock symbol at the bottom of the browser window. These are signs that your information will be encrypted or scrambled, protecting it from hackers.
- **Check suspicious emails:** Before you act on an email request, check a list of the latest email scams on the Federal Trade Commission's website at <http://www.ftc.gov>.
- **And for more tips, go to:** <http://www.cnbc.com/id/102329883#>.