



January 28, 2011

****Consumer Alert **** Consumer Alert **** Consumer Alert ****

ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN URGES CONSUMERS TO PROTECT THEIR INTERNET IDENTITY

Madigan Advises Google, Facebook Users to Protect Personal Information Online Today

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today recognized Data Privacy Day and encouraged Illinoisans to take steps to protect personal information and communication online. Madigan said many computer users are unknowingly vulnerable to financial fraud and privacy invasions online, and they need to stay vigilant to protect their Internet identities.

In light of her investigation into Google, Attorney General Madigan together with her counterparts in states around the country are recognizing today as Data Privacy Day to prevent consumers from falling victim to online identity theft.

In May 2010, Google announced it had been collecting data over wireless networks. Street View, a Google feature that photographs homes, buildings, streets and other landmarks, also was equipped to capture data that was being transmitted over public networks. This data included user emails, passwords and web surfing activity. Madigan and the attorneys general continue to investigate Google's collection of this data.

"Google's collection of personal information demonstrates how easily someone can follow your Internet activity," Madigan said. "Consumers should take this opportunity to follow the necessary steps to ensure protection of their personal information online."

Madigan said it is important for consumers to know that the wireless routers they purchase are not automatically encrypted to protect their privacy online. Consumers must change their wireless settings to protect their data by consulting the instructions for their wireless router or visiting the router manufacturer's website.

Also in recognition of Data Privacy Day, Madigan and several other attorneys general worked with Facebook, the online social networking site, to post a message to users to remind them to review their privacy settings on the site. The message sent today by Facebook will reach more than 32 million of its users. It will link Facebook users to the steps necessary to ensure appropriate privacy of their profiles on the site, and to control the information that strangers and friends can access and share from a user's site.

In addition, OnGuard Online, a consortium of federal government agencies and technology industry experts, recommends additional precautionary steps to secure your wireless network and ensure safe web browsing. The steps below are provided by OnGuard Online:

1. **Use anti-virus and anti-spyware software and a firewall:** Install anti-virus and anti-spyware software. Keep them up-to-date and check to ensure that your firewall is turned on.
2. **Turn off identifier broadcasting.** Most wireless routers broadcast a signal to any device in the vicinity announcing their presence. You don't need to broadcast this information if the person using the network already knows it is there. Disable the identifier broadcasting mechanism if your wireless router allows it.
3. **Change the identifier on your router from the default.** The identifier (SSID) for your router is likely to be a standard, default ID assigned by the manufacturer to all hardware of that model. Change your identifier to something only you know, and remember to configure the same unique ID into your wireless router and your computer so they can communicate.

4. **Change your router's pre-set password for administration:** The manufacturer assigned the router a standard default password. Those default passwords are available to anyone, including hackers, so change it to something only you know. When choosing a password, make sure to choose one of sufficient length and complexity to prevent it from being hacked.
5. **Turn off your wireless network when you know you won't use it:** If you turn the router off when you're not using it, you limit the amount of time that it is susceptible to a hack.
6. **Don't assume public "hot spots" are secure:** Café, hotel and airport "hot spots" are convenient, but they are not secure.
7. **Be careful about the information you access or send from a public wireless network:** Consumers should assume other people can see anything you see or send over a public wireless network.

Data Privacy Day, internationally recognized on January 28, brings necessary awareness to an individual's right to protect his or her most sensitive and personal data. The day unites businesses, individuals, government agencies, non-profit groups and academics in a dialogue about how personal data should be collected, used and stored.

Consumers who believe they may be victims of identity theft are encouraged to contact Attorney General Madigan's Theft Hotline at 1-866-999-5630. Consumers can also contact Madigan's Consumer Fraud Hotline:

Chicago 1-800-386-5438
Springfield 1-800-243-0618
Carbondale 1-800-243-0607

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