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Subject: Weekly Cybersecurity Tips

Weekly Cybersecurity Tips

As the name suggests, “*Public*” Wi-Fi is a completely open and unsecured network that is available to anyone with a Wi-Fi capable device. The open and unregulated nature of *public* Wi-Fi networks makes them inherently insecure – all internet traffic traversing a *public* network is potentially visible to everyone using the network, making said traffic fair game to hackers.

In the case of hotels, airports, cafés, shopping malls, and the many other locations which offer *public* Wi-Fi to consumers, the free internet access provides a convenient way by which to check e-mails, catch up on social media and otherwise surf the web. For hackers, however, *public* Wi-Fi access provides the opportunity to intercept data transferred across the network; in this way, hackers can access *public* Wi-Fi users’ confidential information, such as banking credentials, account passwords, healthcare information and other sensitive material.

Below are a few points to keep in mind when using *public* Wi-Fi:

- All devices are at risk – laptops, smartphones, tablets, etc.
- Verify the legitimacy of the Wi-Fi network when possible. A common tactic employed by hackers is to setup bogus Wi-Fi networks with the same name as local businesses – Wal-Mart, Food Lion, Kohl’s, etc., do not typically provide free Wi-Fi – think twice before joining Wi-Fi networks that seem out of place.
- Use a VPN when possible – VPNs encrypt network traffic, which is one reason why the IT department installs this tool on all County-owned laptops. Encryption makes it virtually impossible for hackers to read traffic, meaning all mobile employees should remain connected to the County’s VPN whenever using *public* Wi-Fi.
- Consider using your smartphone – while not completely free of risk, mobile networks, such as Verizon and AT&T’s 3G/4G networks are considerably more secure than *public* Wi-Fi.

– The IT Department



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