NW Insurance Council

Consumer Alert

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Shopping online for holiday gifts? Protect yourself from cybercriminals, and consider Cyber insurance

What to Know

- *According to the FBI's 2021 Internet Crime Report, the American public and businesses experienced an unprecedented increase in cyber-attacks in 2021, with potential losses up to $6.9 billion.*
- *Individuals and businesses that implement a robust cybersecurity strategy can help reduce the risk of a cyber-attack.*
- *More insurers are now offering Cyber Insurance Policies for homeowners and renters upon request as an endorsement or stand-alone policy.*

PORTLAND, OR, November 30, 2022 – Millions of people will go online to buy gifts for loved ones this holiday season, making it a prime time for cybercriminals to take advantage of unsuspecting or vulnerable shoppers. If you plan to shop online during the holidays or any time of the year, it's important to apply cyber-safety measures and even consider adding cyber coverage to your insurance policy.

Protecting ourselves and our businesses from cybercriminals is crucial to maintaining personal and financial well-being. Even when users take safety measures, savvy

cybercriminals may still find a way in through gaps in digital security strategies. If a cyber-attack occurs, having a Cyber Insurance Policy can assist with a quicker recovery.

“Whether we realize it or not, most of us are a single mouse-click or finger-tap away from giving criminals the keys we use to lock our online accounts,” said Kenton Brine, NW Insurance Council President. “There are steps all consumers should take today to protect personal and business finances online, including simple security measures. But it is also a good idea to consider adding cyber-risk coverage to your insurance policies.”

More insurers are now offering cyber insurance policies for businesses, homeowners and renters. Policies may be available through a stand-alone policy or endorsement for homeowners and renters upon request but can differ by company. A policy may include coverage for identity restoration, attorney’s fees and lost wages and may cover fees for a fraud specialist to manage the restoration process.

Some standard business insurance policies may already provide coverage for certain types of cyber incidents, such as recovery of data due to a computer virus. To extend coverage to a full range of cyber liability risks, however, a stand-alone cyber liability policy customized for your business will need to be purchased, according to I.I.I.

If you are concerned about the risk of a cyber-attack on your personal or business devices, contact your insurance company representative to discuss what cyber coverage options are available.

In the meantime, implementing a cybersecurity plan will help reduce the risk of a cyber-attack. Here are a few tips from NW Insurance Council and the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA):

Online Shopping Tips

- Make sure your software is up to date before online shopping. Turn on automatic updates for your operating system and make sure browser plug-ins (such as

Adobe Flash and Java) are up to date. Keeping your software updated minimizes threats from malware, hackers and other cyber risks

- Avoid free public wi-fi for online shopping. If you plan to go to your favorite coffee shop to do some online shopping, using the shop's free wi-fi could make you vulnerable to cybercriminals. Use a virtual private network or your phone as a hotspot instead.
- Use a credit card or pre-paid credit card when paying online instead of a debit card that is linked to your bank account.
- Monitor your bank accounts on a regular basis so you catch and put a stop to suspicious activity/fraudulent purchases right away.
- Shop at sites that use SSL protection. Look for https:// at the beginning of the URL.
- Always verify the legitimacy of a vendor before supplying any information. Some attackers try to trick you by creating fake websites that appear legitimate to try and steal your information.
- Recognize and avoid phishing scams. If a link looks "off," CISA recommends you "think before you click." Cybercriminals often use phone calls and email scams to trick email recipients into giving away personal information, such as banking or credit card information, or clicking a link that installs harmful software on a computer. Be suspicious of any email, text or phone call that asks for personal or financial information.
- If you plan to give to a charity, do your research to make sure it's a legitimate charitable organization. Never feel pressured to give money or information on the spot. Use online resources, such as CharityWatch, to learn about charities and how they spend the money they receive.

Personal Cybersecurity Tips

- Use anti-virus and firewall protection to help block malware and viruses from entering your device. Be sure to use antivirus software only from trusted vendors.

- Use strong passwords and practice good password management. Consider storing your passwords in a secure location using a password manager, such as LastPass.com. Change your password every six months and make sure your passwords are strong and contain more the six digits, use special characters and include uppercase and lowercase letters.
- Use multifactor authentication, a security protocol that uses a secondary device to verify that you are who you say you are. Typically, verification codes are texted or emailed to you to enter when you sign-in.
- Keep your mobile devices secure by creating a difficult password, only install apps from trusted sources and keep all apps updated. Also, avoid texting sensitive information and perform regular mobile backups to a cloud service.
- Never leave your devices unattended. If you need to leave your laptop, phone or tablet be sure to put them away in a secure place. If you are using a desktop computer, lock your screen.

For more information about how to protect yourself online, visit the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's CISA website. Also, read Mutual of Enumclaw's Cybersecurity Checklist for more details.

If you believe you or another person has been a victim of a cybercrime, visit the Internet Crime Complaint Center for more information and to file a complaint. For information about identify theft and how to file a complaint, visit the Federal Trade Commission's Identity Theft website.

NW Insurance Council is a nonprofit, insurer-supported organization providing information about home, auto and business insurance to consumers, media and public policymakers in Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

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