

INTERNET SAFETY – AN OXYMORON?

It seems every time new technology begins to become generally used there are always people waiting to take advantage of those who are unfamiliar with this technology.

Image being a little kid again and going shopping with your parents – you travel downtown to shop in a store with a single entrance, parking in front and familiar faces all around. While your parents shopped, you played in the toy section or somewhere else in the store and when your parents finished shopping they called for you; you came running and went home. Reset your thoughts for “today” – could you imagine letting your little ones “go play” at the mall while you shopped? Malls which have multiple entrances, large parking lots, superhighways close by and strangers. You would not do this for fear of your child being abducted by those who prey on kids but many parents are following the old thought pattern of “shopping downtown” when they allow their children to go on-line without supervision. The internet must not be treated as your parents treated the old hometown store, the internet must be treated as a Mall. Parents have to undergo a paradigm shift from ignorance of their children’s online activities to ownership of those activities. If parents consider their children too young to roam the streets of a major city unattended, they should not let them roam the Internet unattended either. Even with a lack of knowledge about the internet, parents must still supervise their children while they are online. You may not be “good in math” but you can still help and guide your child as they do their homework.

Over the past year we have read and heard of many cases involving children falling prey to unscrupulous people via "meetings" in chat rooms. Between fiscal year 1996 and fiscal year 2003, the FBI’s Innocent Images National Initiative reported a 2050% increase in Cases Opened (113 to 2430). Given the prevalence of this threat parents must warn their children of the dangers involved in seemingly benign conversations on the Internet. A simple phrase can easily give a predator all the information he or she may need to track and trace the victim. Every child knows not to talk to strangers but somewhere along the line this message has been lost when using the Internet. A predator knows this and therein lays the danger. Let’s not make “Internet Safety” become an Oxymoron.