COMPUTER
NEWS AND NOTES

Be Safe Online

(NAPS)—Being on guard online can help protect your information, your computer—even yourself. Experts say these seven practices can help you be safe while surfing.

1. Protect your personal information. It's valuable. To minimize your risk of identity theft, don't share your personal information unless you know how it will be used and protected. Don't reply to or click on links in any e-mail asking for your personal information.

2. Know who you're dealing with. When shopping online, look for a seller's physical address and a working telephone number. Before downloading free software, read the fine print—some downloads come with spyware.

3. Use antivirus software and a firewall, and update both regularly. Look for antivirus software that recognizes current viruses, as well as older ones; effectively reverses the damage; and updates automatically. If your firewall was shipped in the "off" mode, turn it on, and be sure to set it up properly.

4. Be sure to set up your operating system and Web browser software properly, and update them regularly. Select security settings high enough to reduce your risk of being hacked. Make sure to regularly update your sys-

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tem with the latest patches.

5. Protect your passwords. Keep your passwords in a secure place, and don't share them on the Internet, over e-mail, or on the phone.

6. Back up important files. If you have important files stored on your computer, copy them onto a removable disc and store it in a safe place.

7. Learn who to contact if something goes wrong online. Visit OnGuardOnline.gov and click on "File a Complaint" to learn how to respond if problems occur when you're online.

The website also provides practical tips (including the ones above) from the federal government and the technology industry to help you be on guard against Internet fraud, secure your computer, and protect your personal information.

Web Watch

The helpful content at OnGuardOnline.gov includes tips, articles, videos and quizzes. The site shows you how to report spam or scams and how to sign up for periodic computer security alterations while its interactive quizzes are a fun way to help you figure out how savvy you are about computer safety.