

## Protecting Yourself Online

Though the internet has many advantages, it can also make users vulnerable to fraud, identity theft and other scams. According to a Norton Cybercrime Report, 143 million U.S. consumers were victims of cybercrime in 2017. The American Bankers Association recommends the following tips to keep you safe online:

- ◆ Keep your computers and mobile devices up to date. Having the latest security software, web browser, and operating system are the best defenses against viruses, malware, and other online threats. Turn on automatic updates so you receive the newest fixes as they become available.
- ◆ Establish passwords. A strong password is at least eight characters in length and includes a mix of upper and lowercase letters, numbers, and special characters.
- ◆ Watch out for phishing scams. Phishing scams use fraudulent emails and websites to trick users into disclosing private account or login information. Do not click on links or open any attachments or pop-up screens from sources you are not familiar with.
- ◆ Recognize and avoid bogus website links. Cybercriminals embed malicious links to download malware onto devices and/or/ route users to bogus websites. Hover over suspicious links to view the actual URL that you are being routed to. Fraudulent links are often disguised by simple changes in the URL. For example: [www.ABC-Bank.com](http://www.ABC-Bank.com) vs [ABC\\_Bank.com](http://ABC_Bank.com)
- ◆ Keep personal information personal. Hackers can use social media profiles to figure out your passwords and answer those security questions in the password reset tools. Lock down your privacy setting and avoid posting things like birthdays, addresses, mother's maiden name, etc. Be wary of requests to connect from people you do not know.
- ◆ Secure your internet connection. Always protect your home wireless network with a password. When connecting to public Wi-Fi networks, be cautious about what information you are sending over it. Consider using a Virtual Private Network (VPN) app to secure and encrypt your communication when connecting a public Wi-Fi network. (See the Federal Trade Commission's tips for selecting a VPN app.)
- ◆ Shop safely. Before shopping online, make sure the website uses secure technology. When you are at the checkout screen, verify that the web address begins with [https](https://). Also, check to see if a tiny padlock symbol appears on the page.
- ◆ Read the site's privacy policies. Though long and complex, privacy policies tell you how the site protects the personal information it collects. If you don't see or understand a site's privacy policy, consider doing business elsewhere.