THE INDEPENDENT
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Cybersecurity and the Private Boater

We've all often read about cyber security, or better said, cyber intrusions, in the corporate and government worlds. It even touches the average "Joe or Jill" when one of those corporations loses a file with social security numbers on them – OMG! And none of us has to be reminded that we must guard our credit card numbers, passwords and other personal data that some creep (did I call them just a creep!) might use to steal our "identity."

What does that have to do with boating? Nothing. Directly. Do you use online services to get tidal tables? Buy anything at Westmarine or a similar chandlery by their web site? Getting the picture? Yes, cybersecurity has enough of an impact on us just as boaters that it is well worth dedicating one column to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) National Cybersecurity Awareness Campaign that is now underway.

National Cybersecurity Awareness Campaign

"People cannot value security without first understanding how much is at risk. Therefore, the Federal government should initiate a national public awareness and education campaign…This campaign should focus on public messages to promote responsible use of the Internet and awareness of fraud, identity theft, cyber predators, and cyber ethics."

--White House Cyberspace Policy Review June 2009

Well, now they are. On October 4th, DHS announced the "Stop–Think–Connect" public cybersecurity awareness campaign. This is a national initiative that promotes simple steps that we can take to increase our safety and security online. The creation of "Stop–Think–Connect" was the result of an intensive effort by several industry and governmental entities over the past year. Some names worth mentioning are the National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA), the Anti-Phishing Working Group (APWG), key industry leaders, government agencies, and nonprofits. National Cybersecurity Awareness Month is a coordinated effort between DHS, the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC), and NCSA to raise awareness about the importance of cybersecurity and help us establish smart cyber habits that will lead to increased protection for us and by us, online. Maybe the genesis of it really came from us – a recent national study (Heart + Mind Strategies Online Consumer Security & Safety Messaging Convention, National Consumer Quantitative Survey) found that online safety is a personal priority for Americans where 96% of Americans surveyed felt a personal responsibility to be safe and secure online, and 93% said their online actions could protect not only friends and family but also help make the Internet safer for everyone around the world.

You're The Skipper – Of Your Own Cybersecurity:

There are a few steps that you can take to not only participate in National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, but also enhance cybersecurity year-round

• Make sure that you have anti-virus software and firewalls installed, properly configured, and up-to-date.

• New threats are discovered every day, and keeping your software updated is one of the easier ways to protect yourself from an attack.

• Software updates offer the latest protection against malicious activities. Consider turning on automatic updating if that feature is available.

• Back up key files. For most people, the idea of backing up to "floppies" or CDs is just too daunting. There are now online services that auto-back-up your files while you sleep – and you can retrieve them at will.

• You might even consider joining the National Cybersecurity Awareness Campaign: Stop. Think. Connect at http://www.dhs.gov/files/events/stop-think-connect.shtm

Demonstrate Your Commitment to Cybersecurity

• Show your family's commitment to cybersecurity and National Cybersecurity Awareness Month by signing the online endorsement form at www.staysafeonline.org. The kids will show you how…

• Create a section for cybersecurity on your refrigerator.. Download banners at www.staysafeonline.org and post them on your refrigerator door.

• Add a signature block to your e-mail:

"October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month. Stay Safe Online! Visit http://www.staysafeonline.org for the latest cybersecurity tips."

Find out what more you and the teachers in your life can do to secure cyberspace and how you can share this with others.

• Participate in the National Cyber Security Alliance Cyber Security Awareness Volunteer Education (C-SAVE) Program and help educate elementary, middle, and high-school students about Internet safety and security. For more information or to download the C-Save curriculum, visit www.staysafeonline.org/content/c-save.

• Educate family, friends, peers at www.StaySafeOnline.org

• Learn the fundamentals of cybersecurity, starting with the IT Security Essential Body of Knowledge (EBK)

• For more detailed Tips, read these Tip Sheets from National Cyber Security Alliance

And report Suspicious Cyber Activity to the United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT) by visiting https://forms.us-cert.gov/report/ or by calling 1-888-282-0870

You may also visit http://www.staysafeonline.org/content/report-and-handle-problems for more information.

Boat safely. And "Surf" Safely Too.

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at JoinUSCGAux2010@aol.com or go direct to John Blevins, who is in charge of new members matters, at FSO-PS@emcg.us and we will help you "get in this thing…"