## Pirates In Your Inbox: How To Navigate E-mail Safely

(NAPSA)—Excited about checking your e-mail? Does it contain treasure or trouble? As we get bombarded with spam, clutter and truly fraudulent messages in the inbox, opening messages and responding to their urgent demands ("Your account is suspended until you update your information") or unexpected offers ("This refund/trip/item is yours if you just verify your information") is like sailing the Caribbean of old.

Gartner Group estimates that more than 75 million people received an average of 50 fraudulent messages in a recent 12-month period. In its recent "State of the Net" report, Consumer Reports estimates that 29 percent of consumers have incurred costs associated with online fraud in the last two years, and cites security vendor Symantec, which discovered more than 59 million attacks in just one 24-hour period.

Yet there is treasure in the inbox as well—Pew Internet Project estimates that more than 60 percent of Internet users shop online and companies are trying to increase the frequency and relevance of communication with customers, primarily via e-mail. So how do you navigate the potentially dangerous waters of e-mail safely?

E-mail providers such as AOL, Microsoft and Yahoo! are doing their best to protect you from the bad guys—identifying and discarding known bad messages before you even see them. But they can't catch everyone—just like pirates, the bad guys strike fast and disappear. E-mail providers are also starting to mark



**Screen shot of a computer protected from online pirates.**

some messages as "authentic" but the underlying technology can't see through the disguise used by many crooks.

Fortunately, new services are available that are free, simple to use and provide an intuitive visual indication of legitimate e-mail messages and Web sites. Best of all, they can see through the common disguises used by the pirates of the Net.

The first is a service from Iconix that shows you which e-mail messages are legitimate, using a simple icon in the inbox.

The second is a toolbar, available from several vendors (including Microsoft), that gives a green/yellow/red indication regarding the nature of the Web site you're visiting—known good, unknown, or suspect/known bad. Using the toolbar, even if you've inadvertently entered dangerous waters, you can get a warning before it's too late.

Using these new tools, you'll instantly know what's treasure and what's potential trouble in your inbox and your browser and avoid those online pirates. For more information on these services, see www.iconix.com or search for "phishing toolbar."