



Is Your Privacy At Risk?

(NAPSA)—An increasing number of Americans—and their representatives in Washington—are looking for ways to protect personal and financial privacy while continuing to use the Internet.

Every time you use the 'Net, you put a little bit of information about yourself online. This data can be used to help you get the goods and services you want—but it can also be used by certain sites to try to sell you things you don't want, or worse.

“While consumer privacy is the focal point of public policy initiatives, consumers are the least informed on how their personal info is used,” explains Bob Wheeler, Chief Privacy Officer of iPlace, Inc., which is considered the nation's premier compiler and provider of credit, home and neighborhood information products for consumers and businesses. “Most consumers do not know how to protect themselves online.”

To help, Wheeler offers these tips:

- Read the Privacy Statement to find out what the site will do with your personal data and with whom, or if, it will share it.
- Store your personal data safely. Store all sensitive information on some form of storage media that is not attached to the computer.
- Always log off completely when using a public Internet at a cafe or bookstore, for example. Otherwise, the next person can see what sites you've been on and read your e-mail.
- Invest in a credit monitoring service that alerts you to activity involving your credit cards. Con-



Use only one credit card when shopping online. It's easier to detect fraud on a single card.

sumerInfo.com and freecreditreport.com provide the service and offer a freecredit report too.

- Get antivirus software, the single most important piece of software on home computer users' machines.
- Never open unsolicited e-mail attachments.
- Be careful of DSL or cable modem upgrades as they are easier to crack and always on. Computers with always-on connections are much easier for hackers to find on the 'Net and chances are that yours will be scanned regularly. You can, however, take steps to protect your data by investing in some basic security software for your PC. Access an alarm or fire-wall protection.
- Protect yourself from unwanted mail and solicitations by choosing to opt out when you are asked for your information on a site.

For more information on this matter, e-mail Bob Wheeler at ChiefPrivacyOfficer@iplace.com.