🖥 Computer Corner

How To Protect Your Wireless Network

(NAPSA)—One of the latest identity theft threats is to those who have a wireless computer network in their home or office.

The ID thieves work like this:

Armed with wireless-enabled laptop computers, WiFi hackers will drive through neighborhoods and business parks to see if they can access unprotected and unencrypted wireless computer networks. If they are successful, they can hijack those networks' Internet connections to send spam or download illegal materials.

These tips will help protect your wireless network from hackers:

Don't use TCP/IP for sharing files and sharing printers—If criminals connect to your wireless network, they could potentially access your shared files and printers. Prevent this by denying access to file and print sharing, which will restrict those features from being used by computers outside your network.

Follow safe practices for file sharing—Be careful about what files you share on your network, and only share specific folders—not the whole computer. Also, use a strong password when sharing folders.

Enable WEP encryption—"Wired equivalent privacy" (WEP) is designed to provide the same level of security as a wired network. Thieves usually seek the easiest victim and the least secure network, so the more security features you enable, the greater your chances are of staying safe.

Use WEP for data authentication—Some products let you set the authentication method to

GOOD GEEK ADVICE: Change your computer's password frequently to prevent criminals from breaking in.

"shared key" or "open system." The shared-key method allows for encryption to be used that will authenticate your computer and its data.

Use nonobvious WEP keys—When setting the encryption key on the router, do not use a word that someone can guess. Use a combination of random letters and numbers.

Consider using a "Virtual Private Network" (VPN)—If you do not want to take chances with your data, use a VPN tunnel over your wireless connection.

For more information, visit www.geeksoncall.com.

• *Geeks On Call is an onsite computer support company that trains its technicians in the technical aspects of servicing computers as well as the finer points of customer service. Small businesses—or home computer users—can call the support service and receive help the same day or the next day.*