

Computer Security

Keeping Wireless Connections Secure

(NAPSA)—If *you* think wireless networks are convenient, you should ask a hacker how *he* feels about them.

Techies say wireless networks are especially prone to security problems—and that hackers have been known to drive through neighborhoods and business parks to see if they can access unprotected Wi-Fi networks. If a hacker invades a network, he can use it to send spam, download illegal materials, view private data (financial statements, etc.) or commit identity theft.

Fortunately there are ways to protect yourself. These answers to frequently asked questions may help.

Q: I share files and printers with other computers on my network. How can I protect myself?

A: If your wireless network is hacked, criminals could potentially access your shared files and printers. Prevent this by denying access to file and print sharing. Doing so will restrict those features from being used by computers outside your network. If you have to share files, only share specific ones—not the whole computer. Also, use a strong password.

Q: How can I beef up my laptop's security?

A: 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. WEP can also be used for data authentication. Some products let you set



Hackers Beware—A few simple steps can keep wireless networks secure.

the authentication method to "shared key" or "open system." The shared-key method allows you to use encryption that will authenticate your computer and its data.

Q: Is there a smart way to secure my router?

A: 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.

Q: Are there any other security steps I can take?

A: 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.

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