

# STAYING CONNECTED — AND SAFE — ONLINE

From paying bills and shopping to streaming shows and staying in touch with family, the internet plays a big role in everyday life. While being connected offers convenience and opportunity, it also makes online safety more important than ever. A few simple habits can help protect your personal information and keep your household connected with confidence.



### **Start with strong passwords.**

Use unique passwords for each account, especially for email, banking, and utility accounts. A strong password includes a mix of upper- and lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols—and avoids personal details like birthdays or pet names. Consider using a password manager to securely store and generate passwords.

### **Watch for phishing scams.**

Scammers often send emails or texts that look legitimate, asking you to click a link or provide personal information. Be cautious of messages that create urgency, request sensitive details, or come from unfamiliar senders. When in doubt, go directly to the organization's website or contact them using a trusted phone number.

### **Secure your home Wi-Fi network.**

Change the default name and password on your router and enable encryption (such as WPA3 or WPA2). Place your router in a central location and keep its software updated to help guard against vulnerabilities. A secure Wi-Fi network protects every connected device in your home.

### **Keep devices updated.**

Regular software updates on phones, computers, tablets, and smart devices fix security flaws and improve performance. Enable automatic updates whenever possible so you don't miss important protections.

### **Protect the whole household.**

Talk with children and teens about online privacy, appropriate sharing, and recognizing suspicious messages. For adults, review privacy settings on social media and apps to control what information is shared publicly.

### **Back up important information.**

Save copies of important files and photos to a secure cloud service or external hard drive. Backups ensure your information is protected in case of device failure or cyber incidents.

Staying connected should make life easier—not stressful. By practicing smart online habits and taking a proactive approach to digital safety, you can enjoy the benefits of technology while protecting what matters most.