

BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU OF MAINLAND B.C. CONSUMER RELEASE

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PREVENT IDENTITY FRAUD ON NETWORKING SITES

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VANCOUVER: Online networking sites like Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn are a fun way to connect with people; however, these web communities are quickly becoming a breeding ground for identity fraudsters.

"Social networking sites can be a fun way to communicate, but users have to avoid giving away too much personal information," says Lynda Pasacreta, President of the BBB Mainland BC. "Your Facebook account can come back to haunt you."

Facebook users and other social networking sites can publicly share details like date of birth, hometown, phone numbers, email addresses, and other personal information.

Identity thieves prey on this type of information to gain access to online bank accounts, which will often have security questions that require answers to such things as a pet's name, favorite sports team, or your mother's maiden name etc.

In other situations, fraudsters can start other online accounts using the personal information found on a social networking account.

While there are privacy controls on social networking sites to limit the amount of personal data that can be shown, users have to be vigilant in knowing who they can trust. Inviting a person to be your new "friend" on any social networking site may be a security risk.

The BBB advises consumers to take the following steps to avoid identity theft:

- * Limit the amount of personal information shared on your Facebook accounts
- * Consider very carefully who you add as friends
- * Use a variety of different passwords for your online services
- * If you are a parent, ask your kids what websites, message boards, or chatrooms they use, and then visit the sites and use them. Remember, if a site allows your child to post information such as an email address, a full name, or a street address, your child can be contacted by anyone who sees that post online.

For more information regarding phishing, visit www.bbbvan.org.