



## **Consumer Advisory**

**From the Office of Rice County Attorney**

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### **“S” is for SAFTEY**

The best way to keep your online information safe and secure is to make sure the information you send is encrypted. Encryption will scramble your information into a code so that others will not be able access it.

Many hotels, coffee shops and airports have free Wi-Fi for their customers. This is convenient but not always secure. Unencrypted hot-spots leave your private information vulnerable to hackers who can capture your passwords, account information and even pose as you on social network sites.

A secure Wi-Fi is only effective if it requires a WPA or WPA 2 password. If the hot spot you use doesn't require a password, it is not secure.

The second way to ensure your internet safety is to make sure you use a secure website. Think of the URL as the return address on a letter. You'll know the site is secure by checking the web address. A secure site will show a padlock icon and the address field will have “https” (the “s” means secure). Make sure each page of the website is secure (https), not just the home page, especially when you are ordering online. Your information will be encrypted before it is sent.

Other online safety tips:

- Never email financial information such as your bank account information or social security number even if the network is secure.
- Don't stay logged on to any site. Log off each and every time.
- Change your passwords often and do not use the same password for all your accounts. If a hacker gets into one account, they will be able to gain access to others.
- Make sure your social media passwords are changed frequently and are difficult to guess. If a hacker gets into your social media account, they can pose as you and steal your contact list, your photos and more.
- Teach your children (both young and old) these safety tips. Many people are not aware of the “S” rule website security.

Remember “S” is for Safety and Secure. Websites start with https and secure Wi-Fi hot spots require a password.

**Need help or have a question?**  
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