

FOCUS ON SECURITY

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Travel Cyber Security

When you travel for work or pleasure, cyber security may be the last thing you want to think about. But if you're not careful, your travels can lead you to places you'd rather not go! This issue of *Focus on Security* examines techniques you can follow to keep yourself safe while traveling.

Learn the Risks

It's easy to be aware of the risks and dangers you face when you're at home or at work going about your normal routines. But when you're in unfamiliar places, you can be more easily distracted by new surroundings and activities instead of thinking about your cyber safety. Forming and practicing sound cyber habits is a full time job, even when you're on vacation.



Though you may be trying to relax, attackers are always on the lookout for holes in your cyber security that they can exploit. You're aware of the strengths and weaknesses of your work and home networks, but when you travel, you may have to rely on unfamiliar networks and use your devices in unfamiliar places, which significantly increases cyber risks.

Attackers can exploit poorly-secured or unsecured networks to intercept financial information, login credentials, or other personally identifiable information. They can also set up decoy "evil twin" Wi-Fi hotspots to steal private information or install malware on your device.

Even your hotel room may not be safe from attackers. Some attackers may be bold enough to try to steal your device from your hotel room, or to install malware on your device while it's unattended.

Did You Know?

Around **12,000 laptops** are stolen from airports each week.

Keep Your Devices Safe

Follow the tips below to protect your devices and personal information while traveling.

- Physically secure your mobile devices at all times. Keep small personal electronics secured in your pockets or purse. Keep larger tablets and laptops secured in your room safe whenever possible. Physical possession of a device provides a thief with much more time to obtain your sensitive information from those devices.
- Password-protect all of your devices. Your government-furnished equipment (GFE) provided by USDA is required to be protected with passwords, PINs, and multi-factor authentication. You should password- and PIN-protect all of your personal devices too, especially when traveling, in case they are lost or stolen.
 - › Report lost or stolen GFE immediately at 888-926-2373.
- Avoid using shared computers. Whether the computer is in an Internet café or your upscale hotel's business center, you should avoid using it. Attackers may be able to steal personal information from you by installing malware such as keystroke loggers, accessing files you forgot to delete, or even gathering information from accounts that didn't log out properly.
- Before you travel, update your personal equipment with the latest operating system and application patches. Applying updates and patching your apps on your devices reduces security loopholes that an attacker may use. Pay particular attention to any anti-virus apps or software to make sure their definitions are updated.
- Use a virtual private network (VPN) if possible. VPNs are Internet connections that are provided through private servers.
- Look out for evil twin hotspots. Evil twin hotspots are Wi-Fi hotspots set up by an attacker to intercept your personal information. They're given an official-sounding name to make them look like a legitimate hotspot, but don't be fooled! They're an easy way for an attacker to intercept login information or personal communications. VPNs or your cell phone's data connection are safer alternatives.
- Turn off location tracking on your social media accounts. Platforms like Facebook list your location in your status updates. Attentive criminals can tell that you're far from home even if you don't directly mention that you're on vacation.



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