

## ALABAMA SECURITIES COMMISSION

Post Office Box 304700 Montgomery, Alabama 36130-4700  
Telephone: (334) 242-2984 or 1-800-222-1253 Fax: (334) 242-0240  
Email: [asc@asc.alabama.gov](mailto:asc@asc.alabama.gov) Website: [www.asc.alabama.gov](http://www.asc.alabama.gov)

### Alabama Securities Commission's Back-to-School Cybersecurity Tips

**MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA (August 21, 2023)** – Summer vacation has come to an end and school supply lists are posted. In addition to pencils, binders, and paper products, many students will also find technology products on the list, including tablets, laptops, headphones, and other wireless devices which demand extreme vigilance for safe operation. Students using technology inside and outside the classroom are encouraged to understand the risks associated with the internet and develop good practices for online safety and security.

Starting the school year with a strong cybersecurity plan helps both parents and children safeguard their personal and financial information and minimize the risks of becoming a victim to cyber fraud and data breaches, which can have devastating consequences. “The dependence on technology within schools is not lost on fraudsters. They are familiarizing themselves with new technology to target students and teachers. When combating cybercrimes it is critical to be proactive, not just reactive,” said ASC Director, Amanda Senn. Listed below are simple cybersecurity tips to prepare for the new school year:

1. Keep devices updated! Software updates are critical to defending against cyber risks.
2. Update passwords frequently and use a mixture of letters, numbers, and characters, especially for passwords used to access financial accounts. Passwords are often leaked in massive data breaches, and routinely changing passwords enhances the safety of information stored online.
3. Avoid connecting to free public Wi-Fi. This is a gateway for scammers to host decoy networks in coffee shops, hotels, libraries, etc. Hackers can use fraudulent Wi-Fi to view your personal information. Schools may require devices to be connected to their network and students should be extremely cautious while navigating the internet while connected, especially if certain websites are programmed to automatically log-in when connected. These websites may contain financial and personal information which can then be accessed by hackers any time that device is “on-line.”
4. Do not click on links that are emailed or texted to you unless you verify the source and know the person or business transmitting the message. Do not engage with vague texts that appear to be addressed specifically to you, such as “Hello, Jane, we offer discounted laptops.”
5. Never give out personal information unless the purpose and source have been verified, especially when visiting retail sites. Fraudsters have developed highly sophisticated ways to obtain information by creating fake webpages and tailoring text messages based on information gleaned from social media.

It is imperative to have conversations as a family about implementing and maintaining a cybersecurity plan to better protect your personal and financial information. It only takes one device to be compromised for vital information to fall into the wrong hands. Regular check-ins with each other about updating devices and changing passwords can help save you from becoming a victim of fraud. The consequences of a compromised device can be costly, and if a fraudster steals your identity, the damage could take years to repair.

The ASC cautions citizen investors of all ages and experience to thoroughly scrutinize and research any investment opportunity or offer. Contact the ASC at 1-800-222-1253 to check out any person or a financial professional offering an investment opportunity or investment advice for a fee and the products they offer for proper registration. Contact the ASC to report suspected fraud, inappropriate securities business practices, or to obtain consumer information. The ASC provides free investor education and fraud prevention materials in print, on our website, and through educational presentations upon request.

**ALABAMA SECURITIES COMMISSION**

Post Office Box 304700 Montgomery, Alabama 36130-4700

Telephone: (334) 242-2984 or 1-800-222-1253 Fax: (334) 242-0240

Email: [asc@asc.alabama.gov](mailto:asc@asc.alabama.gov) Website: [www.asc.alabama.gov](http://www.asc.alabama.gov)