

## DON'T BECOME A MONEY MULE!

*"It's crucial to understand that what may look to be the harmless movement of money from place to place is anything but harmless,"* says James Abbot, special agent, FBI Money Laundering, Forfeiture, and Bank Fraud Unit.

According to the Better Business Bureau ("BBB"), fraudsters are signing on to dating sites and gaining the trust of those looking for love. The scheme can take months to build a relationship before the criminals begin asking for money for emergencies.



It is a heartless crime that preys on the lonely, the trusting and the vulnerable, but criminal masterminds add insult to injury by turning their victims into co-conspirators themselves. A BBB report estimates that in 2018, 20 to 30 percent of romance victims were used as money mules.

Unsuspecting singles are further victimized by inadvertently participating in criminal activity as a "money mule" by opening bank accounts, cashing forged checks or illegally wiring money out of the country. These victims make the perfect money mules because they let their guard down as they believe they're in love with these scammers, and these scammers tell them everything they want to hear.

Now law enforcement officials, banking industry professionals and consumer advocates are warning Americans of the risk.

If you have received solicitations of this type, **do not respond to them and do not click on any links they contain.** Inform your local police or the FBI. For more information, download the FBI's Money Mule Awareness Booklet by visiting <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/money-mule-awareness-booklet.pdf/view>.

## Signs You May be Acting as a Money Mule

- You received an unsolicited email or contact over social media promising easy money for little to no effort.
- You are asked to open a bank account in your name or in the name of a company you form to receive and transfer money.
- Your online companion, whom you have never met in person, asks to receive funds in your bank account and then "process funds" or "transfer funds" via a wire transfer, ACH, mail, or money service business (such as Western Union or MoneyGram) to an individual you do not know.
- You are allowed to keep a portion of the money you transfer.
- You, in this fictitious company, have no specific job description or duties.

## How to Protect Yourself

- A legitimate company will never request you use your own bank account to transfer their money. Do not accept any job offers that ask you to do this.
- Never give your financial details to someone you don't know and trust, especially if you met them online.
- Be wary when job advertisements are poorly written with grammatical errors and spelling mistakes.
- Be suspicious when the individual you met on a dating website wants to use your bank account for receiving and forwarding money.
- Perform online searches to verify the information from any solicitation emails and contacts.



Three bedrooms. Two baths.  
Unlimited snuggles.

Mortgage | Refinancing  
Construction Financing



MEMBER FDIC 

## IS THE INTERNET DANGEROUS FOR MY KIDS?

**The simple answer is YES!** Kids spend a lot of time on their devices (whether we want them to or not), so it is important to know the basic internet safety steps to take in order to help protect them.

**False identities target your children.** Making new friends online is easy and convenient, but it is so different than doing so in person. Why? Because you can't see who is at the other end of the computer.

**Warn kids about internet predators.** The internet makes it very easy for predators to create a new, false identity. Unfortunately, many children, teenagers, and their parents cannot tell if the person they are talking to online is an internet predator until it is too late.

**Remind your child that not all information is private.** Regrettably, many individuals do not know that the information that is posted online isn't always private. For starters, most teens have their profiles set to public, as opposed to private. This means that anyone can view it. There are also online message boards that are indexed by search engines allowing others to view the conversations that were had, even years down the road.

**Let your child know that he/she is in control.** When your child uses the internet, they are the ones who are in control. This can be okay if your child is older and mature, but you honestly never know. You may ask your child not to communicate with strangers online, give out their phone number, or share pictures with strangers, but that doesn't mean that they will follow your rules.



### **Determine if your child is ready to use a computer and the internet.**

Young elementary school children are likely to use the internet to play computer games. Towards the fifth or sixth grade, children may start to use the internet to conduct research for school projects. This is when it is important to start monitoring your child's use of the internet. Even if your child doesn't use online social networking websites, internet chat rooms or visit adult websites, it doesn't mean that they can't accidentally come across them.

Junior high school and high school students need the most monitoring online. Not only are they using the internet to conduct research, but also to communicate with their friends and to make new friends. Unfortunately, not all teenagers are educated on the dangers that lurk online, especially where internet chat rooms and social networking websites are concerned.

***As a reminder, you have the ability to determine when and where your child can access the internet.***

# Financial responsibility starts here.

## **Squad Student Banking\***

- Easy Money Transfers
- No Monthly Account Fee
- Free Low Balance Alerts
- Overdraft Protection Available
- Free Mobile Deposit
- Free Online and Mobile Banking

 **Trustmark**

