

Net surfers beware: Scams run rampant on-line

A new pamphlet issued by the Federal Trade Commission warns Web users about fraud

By David Ryan
Freelance Reporter

Internet surfers beware. The Internet is home to scam artists doing what they do best — ripping people off.

The Federal Trade Commission, a government agency that regulates businesses, recently published a consumer information pamphlet informing World Wide Web users on how to spot potential scams.

"Fraud is rampant on the Internet," said Patricia Leigh, contact representative for the FTC. Leigh said the FTC has posted a Web site documenting the types of fraud consumers have encountered in the past.

"Every type of fraud that's listed under the investment category and the telemarketing category is also being conducted on the Internet," Leigh said.

Some of the most common are pyramid scams, seminar scams and Internet access scams.

A pyramid scam "is any attempt to make money on the presupposition of the ever-increasing supply of fools," said Dave Bush, a professor of marketing at the University.

"You might get a letter telling you to send money to [the person who sent you the letter]," Bush said. "Then you're supposed to get two more people to also give money to [the person who sent you the letter]."

For recruiting these new people into the scheme, the original person sends you a payment.

Bush explained the problem with pyramids: "The hangup of the whole thing is that if you get out your calculator, you can figure each level [of the pyramid] increases by a power of two. You need a very, very large pool of people or else the pool dies — roughly the population of India. What happens is a bunch of people get stuck at the end."

Another kind of scam, seminar scams, tell surfers they can earn

Avoiding fraud

The FTC recommends caution when conducting business on-line:

- Make sure you receive all of a company's claims or promises in writing. Scam artists will be scared away by that demand.
 - Investigate any company's list of claimed references by calling them. Scam artists often use phony references.
 - Do not take a company's claims of what your earnings will be at face value. Talk with people — in person — who have bought the offer.
- SOURCE: www.ftc.gov

big bucks as a result of being trained at a free seminar. All a surfer needs to do is attend a free seminar.

"[Seminar scams are] a pretty common type of fraud," Bush said. "People who are really thirsty to know more about their business can be susceptible to

them."

According to the FTC's pamphlet, the Internet version usually involves a scam artist who prints an Internet yellow pages.

Leigh described the process: "[The scam artist] will go to people and say that you are perfect for this Internet consulting job — just attend our free seminar and we'll train you."

The "training" surfers receive turns out to be a high-pressure sales pitch to buy space to advertise themselves as Internet consultants on their yellow pages. The result is that surfers receive no training and scam artists receive advertising revenue.

"The reason these seminar schemes work is because they don't charge that much for what they want people to buy," Bush said.

Another type of fraud involves Internet access. It works like this: surfers encounter a company on the Web that tells them they can earn lots of money as a walk-up Internet access kiosk owner.

"People don't want to run vend-

ing machines, but they do like the [Internet access] idea," Leigh said. "I think the appeal is that because it's high tech, if you get in early on the deal, you are guaranteed to be successful."

The company promises to place the Internet kiosks in high-traffic areas such as airports and shopping malls. Instead, what happens is that the company places the kiosks in low-rent, low-traffic areas.

Leigh did have some basic advice for surfers: "If it looks too good to be true, it probably is."

"When something sounds too good to be true, take a step back," Leigh said. "You are as vulnerable on the Internet just as if you got a call from some stranger asking for your credit card number."

Surfers can research companies on the FTC's Web site at www.ftc.gov or by calling the FTC at (206) 220-6363. There is also the Better Business Bureau at (503) 226-3981 and Dunn & Bradstreet, a credit investigating company that will give a company's credit profile for a fee.

Student Senate approves \$200,000 request for EMU elevator

By Kristina Rudinskas
Student Activities Reporter

The Student Senate approved a motion 15 to 2 to give \$200,000 from the Overrealized Fund to the EMU board to assist in the construction of an elevator granting wheelchair access to the Oregon Daily Emerald, International Student Lounge and Adell McMillan Art Gallery.

"We can't start a project without funding," explained EMU board member and Senator Jenna Wasson. "You don't want us to dig a shaft without an elevator."

The Senate granted the money on the requirement that the EMU board return the \$200,000 if students refuse to pass a ballot measure raising incidental fees to fund \$330,000 of the total \$550,000

cost.

The elevator would bring the EMU up to American Disabilities Act standards required by the government. The EMU has been in violation of those standards since the wheelchair lift in the stairwell broke about a year ago.

"Compliance of ADA standards doesn't seem like something we should be voting on because it's

the law," said Senator Michael Olson.

Debate ensued for an hour over in the student senate. Many senators were concerned with depleting the Overrealized Fund, which would only have \$87,000 remaining for the Senate to access the rest of this year. Many senators voiced their concern with keeping the incidental fee down next year.

Project Saferide was granted \$2800 by the Senate to repair transmissions on two of their cars that had recently broken down. The Senate approved a line item transfer of funds for the Singapore Student Association and a transfer of ASUO funds from payroll to pay for the extra \$385 cost of running this year's election.

Jewish Student Union Presents: Holocaust Remembrance Week April 19-23

April 20

THE NEXT GENERATION EMU FIR ROOM 7:30pm

One girl's personal understanding about her Grandfather's story of survival. The grandfather, daughter, and granddaughter give an intergenerational presentation.

April 22-23

Reading of the Names EMU Amphitheater

(EMU Breezeway if rain)
Join us for opening remarks by the JSU at 6:45 pm to start off the 24hr. reading of the names and a closing candlelight vigil at sundown for personal reflection about the week.

April 19-23

Holocaust Visual History EMU FIR ROOM

Pictorial self tour. Open 10am-11pm



Anna: The chronicle of one woman's victory through faith, over Nazism while she is confined to a concentration camp.

Sunday, April 19, 2 pm in Beall Hall.



Photo © Tony Hayden, Aloha Studio/Gallery

A One-Woman Musical Performance

Tickets are available at EMU Ticket Office and at the door:
\$5 Students/Children,
\$7 Community
Tickets will also be on sale Friday, April 17 from 10-4 in front of University Bookstore.

For more info contact JSU @ 346-4366

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UNIVERSITY BRIEFS

UO ranks 9th among 'wired colleges'

For the second year in a row, the University is ranked among the top 10 colleges and universities for on-line services.

The May issue of YAHOO Internet Life magazine ranked the University ninth among "America's 100 Most Wired Colleges."

Peterson's, a publisher of college guidebooks, collaborated with the magazine to deepen and strengthen this year's survey. Questions about on-line registration and Internet censorship as well as statistics on the number of public computers available on campus and lab waiting time rounded out the survey.

The top 10 wired colleges are (in ascending order): Dartmouth College, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Rensselaer Polytechnic, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Carnegie Mellon University, California Institute of Technology, Indiana University at Bloomington, University of Oregon and Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

— Ben Romano

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