

Cybersecurity Spring-Cleaning: How To Tidy Up Your Digital Footprint To Help Avoid Data Breaches

(NAPS)—Similar to how dust collects in the nooks and crannies of homes during the winter, many people have accumulated years of data from old devices, e-mail accounts and online profiles. All this available information creates a digital footprint that could leave them exposed to unnecessary cybersecurity risks.

As many people look to refresh their living spaces each spring with a deep cleaning, cybersecurity experts also recommend that people take the time to clean their digital presence.

"In today's world of connected devices, we often overlook the volume of data available online. All this information creates a digital footprint that cybercriminals can use to hack devices and accounts," said Dennis Bonilla, executive dean, University of Phoenix® College of Information Systems and Technology, School of Business and College of Security and Criminal Justice. "It is a good practice to periodically purge old data to help reduce that footprint and decrease the likelihood of cyberattacks."

According to a University of Phoenix survey,* nearly half (43 percent) of U.S. adults have experienced a personal data breach in the past three years. As a result, 85 percent have adjusted their online habits, such as deleting suspicious e-mails (61 percent), avoiding clickbait (49 percent) and limiting personal information shared online (43 percent).

*This poll was conducted from May 25-30, 2017, among a national sample of 1991 registered voters. The interviews were conducted online and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of registered voters based on age, race/ethnicity, gender, educational attainment, and region. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.



It's a good idea to give your digital devices an annual "cleaning" to get rid of old data.

To help decrease data breaches, Bonilla suggests the following three steps to tidy up your digital footprint.

1. Create a secondary e-mail account

Many websites may require an e-mail address to register or access information. These sites can be hacked and allow cybercriminals access to login credentials that are shared with other websites. Bonilla uses a primary work e-mail but creates secondary e-mail accounts for mailing lists and profile-protected websites to help avoid spam or phishing attempts.

He warns not to use secondary e-mail accounts to sign up for things like social media sites or applications with companies or people who may share your information with third-party sites.

2. Remove unused social networks and mobile apps

Social media sites possess a wealth of personal information that can be stolen without proper security measures in place. Unused or old accounts should be deactivated and per-

sonal information should be removed.

Additionally, Bonilla encourages mobile users to delete apps they do not frequent from their smartphones, as these often collect and share data. Make sure to check the security settings before installing apps. If they require access to contacts, locations or other data, decide if the app is worth sharing that information.

3. Manage financial accounts

Similar to social media accounts, Americans should remove financial information from online vendor accounts. If you do not frequent an online retailer, Bonilla says to check out as a guest to reduce the number of websites that store your financial information.

While many companies have fraud and security settings in place, data can be at risk if a company experiences a breach. Using more-secure payment options like PayPal can also help keep your data secure.

These steps can help limit data breaches, but Bonilla said that Americans must be aware that any data shared online could be stolen.

"We can never truly remove content about us that is available online, nor can we fully prevent criminals from attempting to breach our data," Bonilla said. "Consider limiting the amount of personal info you share online. The less information available, the safer you can be."

Shopping For Yard Equipment: Things To Know

(NAPS)—If you're like most people, when spring comes, you're ready to get outside and make your yard both beautiful and functional. Maybe you're aiming to have the best yard on the block, want to install an outdoor family room, or want to expand your space for entertaining. Perhaps your kids or pets could use a better space for play. Regardless of need, now is the time to get "backyard ready."

The Tools You'll Need

"Completing big outdoor jobs is always easier with help from outdoor power equipment," said Kris Kiser, president and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI). "The right outdoor power equipment can help you get the work done faster and can help you safely maintain your yard." These tips from Kiser can help you select the machinery you need to get the job done.

- Plan your needs. Draw a sketch of your yard. Include any major features such as trees, bushes, an herb or vegetable garden, flower beds, lawn furniture, play or sports equipment, an outdoor patio, or birdbath. Note where maintenance may be required. Will bushes need to be trimmed back from your home or garage? Do you want to put in some flowering bushes or a tree? Are you planning to install a fence and more grass because of your pet? Now list the tools and equipment needed to take care of your yard and what will make the job easier.
- Consider equipment needed. Visit your garage or shed and find all your lawn and garden tools. Wheel out your mower and get out other equipment. Look it over and make a list of what's needed or could be upgraded. Repair anything that needs attention or identify where a newer or other machine is required. If you have a large vegetable gar-

den, you need a cultivator or tiller. If you have a large lawn, an upgrade to a riding lawn mower might make mowing easier. A string trimmer might make caring for bushes or trimming grass near a fence line easier. A pole pruner can help trim back limbs that are too high to reach safely with a saw and a leaf blower can clear leaves faster than a rake.

- Research equipment online before you buy. Think about efficiencies of scale. The right equipment can mean more time for other activities and make doing yard work more enjoyable, too. Doing online research in advance can help you pick the right equipment for the job. Outdoor power equipment can be gas, electric or battery powered and technology is rapidly affecting product design. There are even robotic lawn mowers available today. Equipment may be sized to handle a smaller job or a massive one. Ultimately, your decision should be based on your needs.
- Ask questions. Talk with the staff at the store or ask online about the equipment. In the store, ask to pick up and hold equipment to determine its "fit" for you. Discuss safety features and ask about fueling and care instructions. Find out how often equipment may need to be serviced.
- Make a plan for storage and maintenance. Store your equipment in a cool and dry place. It should typically be serviced at the end of the fall and the beginning of the spring. Put service dates on your calendar with a reminder.

Learn More

For safety information and to find out which manufacturers make various outdoor power equipment products, go to www.opei.org.

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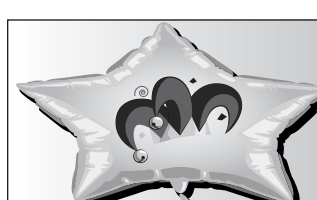
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ED POPE found the National Mom & Pop Business Owners Day graphic on page 6B (Flag - Bottom Right corner in Information Box). He won a gift certificate to Sweet Magnolias.



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