

The National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA) and Better Business Bureau (BBB) say now is the perfect time for a "digital spring cleaning." In many households, spring cleaning is an annual ritual marked by clearing out closets, basements and garages, de-cluttering cabinets, and getting everything spic and span. While making sure your home is in tip-top shape, don't forget about getting a fresh start with your online life as well. Add a digital element to your spring cleaning rite by updating security software, unclogging your inbox, and ridding your smartphone of unused apps.

"Plan to conduct a digital de-clutter in addition to sprucing up your home this spring," said Michael Kaiser, NCSA's executive director. "Take care of that long, overdue digital maintenance and you will be more secure against losing valuable, personal information and being a victim of identity theft while making your online life more manageable. With some smart, simple practices, you will help protect yourself, your family and the extended digital community while enjoying the Internet with greater confidence."

The bulk of digital cleaning falls into four buckets: keeping a clean machine, staying secure, cleaning up your online reputation, and purging files. Follow NCSA's tried and true STOP.THINK.CONNECT. tips as well as the other advice listed, and you will be well on your way to a safer, more secure online life. Visit NCSA's STOP.THINK.CONNECT. site at stopthinkconnect.org for a library of additional resources.

"Personally Identifiable Information can be stolen and used for identity theft if not disposed of properly. BBB recommends you safely store what you must keep and carefully destroy the rest," said Frances Henderson, National Director of Privacy Initiatives with the Council of Better Business Bureaus. "April is known for spring cleaning and tax season - both represent powerful triggers to sort out your documentation - whether it's on paper or digital."

BBBs across the country are hosting dozens of "Secure Your ID Day" shredding events on or about April 18, and many are offering shredding of hard drives, disks and memory cards, as well. Go to bbb.org/secure-your-id-day for a calendar of events, a schedule of what documents should be saved and for how long and more information on data privacy and security.

NCSA and BBB offer these tips for your digital spring cleaning

• Keep Clean Machines - Keeping all web-connected devices - including PCs, mobile phones, smartphones, and tablets - free from malware and infections makes the Internet safer for you and more secure for everyone. Keep all critical software current: Having all software current is one of the best security measures you can take. This includes security software, web browsers, document readers, operating systems, and any other software you use regularly. Clean up your mobile life: Most of us have apps we no longer use as well as ones that need updating. Delete unused apps and keep others current, including the operating system on your mobile device. An added benefit of deleting unused apps is more storage space and longer battery life.

• Make Sure You're Secure - Enhancing the security of your online accounts is a fast and simple way to be safer online. Get two steps ahead: Turn on two-step authentication - also known as two-step verification or multi-factor authentication - on accounts where available. Many of the Internet's most popular email services, social networks, and financial institutions offer this key security step free of charge, but you must opt in to turn it on. Visit stopthinkconnect.org/2stepsahead to learn more and view a list of the websites that offer two-factor authentication. Make better passwords: If your passwords are too short or easy to guess, it's like leaving your car unlocked in a parking lot. Longer passwords and those that combine capital and lowercase letters with numbers and symbols provide better protection. Unique account, unique password: Having separate passwords - at least for key accounts like email, banking, and social networking - helps to thwart cybercriminals. Write it down and keep it safe: Everyone can forget a password. Keep a list that's stored in a safe, secure place away from your computer. Secure your phone: Use a passcode or a finger swipe to unlock your phone.

• Clean Up Your Online Reputation - Take an active role in shaping your digital footprint. Own your online presence: Review the privacy and security settings on websites you use to be sure that they remain set to your comfort level for sharing. It's OK to limit with whom you share information. Clean up your social media presence: Delete old photos and comments that are embarrassing or no longer represent who you are. Search for yourself online: Update information that is no longer current. Update your "online self": Is your LinkedIn profile current? Are other social media sites up-to-date? Review your personal information and update it where needed.

• Digital File Purge and Protection - Tend to your digital records just as you do for paper files. Clean up your email: Save only those emails you really need. Your inbox is likely stuffed with offers, logistical arrangements, and other outdated materials. Delete what you don't need and be sure to empty your deleted mail folders. If you must keep old messages, move them to an archive. Manage subscriptions: Unsubscribe to newsletters, email alerts, and updates you no longer read. Update your online photo album: Delete or back up old or less flattering photos of yourself, your family, and friends. In addition to not showing your best side, they take up space. Empty your recycle bin. Update your online relationships: Review friends on social networks and contacts on phones and PCs and make sure everyone on those lists still belongs. File upkeep: Delete or archive older files such as numerous drafts of the same document. Back it up: Copy important data to a secure cloud site or to another drive where it can be safely stored. Password-protect back-up drives and keep them in a different location off the network for maximum security. Dispose of electronics securely: Wiping data isn't enough. When you dispose of old electronics, look for facilities that shred hard drives, disks, and memory cards. BBB is hosting "Secure Your ID Day" paper shredding events in communities nationwide, and many of these will include electronic shredding. Some municipalities also offer this service.

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Cheraw Arts Commission Seeking Artists for Summer Event

The Cheraw Arts Commission will present an art event on Thursday, June 11 and is looking for visual artists, photographers and fine craft artists. Artists will be placed at various venues and spaces in downtown Cheraw. Maps will be available for attendees to walk about and meet the artists and view their art. This will be a juried event, and interested artists will be required to submit a sample art piece by May 25 to be considered for participation. All work must be original and created by the artist. Youth artists are encouraged to participate. The evening will feature art, music and food from 5 until 9 p.m. This is a free event for attendees and participating artists.

Artists should contact the Cheraw Arts Commission office at 843-537-8420 ext 12 for additional information and details. The Cheraw Arts Commission is located at the Cheraw Community Center, 200 Powe Street.

Free Kids' Fishing Events Scheduled

To celebrate National Fishing and Boating Week 2015, the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission is supporting more than 30 kids' fishing events in late May through mid-June.

The events, most of which are free, are being held across the state and are listed on the Commission's website (www.ncwildlife.org). People interested in attending an event should check the list frequently as more events are added.

In addition to catching fish at an event, young anglers at participating events can enter a statewide drawing for a chance to win one of more than 150 fishing-related prizes. The grand prize is a lifetime sportsman's license, which includes freshwater and saltwater fishing privileges, as well as hunting privileges, donated by Neuse Sport Shop, located in Kinston. The first prize is a lifetime freshwater fishing license, donated by the N.C. State Council of Trout Unlimited. Neuse Sport Shop also is donating tackle boxes, rod-and-reel combos and spools of fishing line, while the Wildlife Commission is donating prizes, such as fishing towels, playing cards and mini-tackle boxes. Local sponsors for many events will provide prizes and gifts to registered participants as well.

The Wildlife Commission will conduct the drawing for prizes at the end of June and will publish a list of winners on its website in July.

The Commission also is stocking fish at many of the sites before the events to give participants a better chance of catching fish.

For more information about National Fishing and Boating Week 2015, visit the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation's website, www.takemefishing.org. For more information on fishing in public, inland waters, visit www.ncwildlife.org/fishing.

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