

Safely Using Airport Wi-Fi

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(Editors Note: Although this is written with Norton by Symantec products in mind, the tips are valid and important. Enjoy your trip!)

Heading out of town to visit relatives during the Holidays is as traditional as turkey dinners, electronic gifts, mistletoe, and snowmen. But what many people do not look forward to is the hustle, bustle, and time-consuming activity of actually heading into, through, and out of airports. This year, more than ever, millions of travelers will be using the public Wi-Fi systems available at municipal and International airports around the world. You may be one of them. With your handheld device, your laptop, or your tablet computer, you'll be checking on your flights, sending out email, or maybe even working on that report that you promised your boss by January 3rd. But how safe is the airport's wireless security? How do you protect yourself – and your private information - from identity theft, fraud, and other cybercrimes?



Airports are high on the list of having “rampant phony Wi-Fi hot spots” created by phishers and other criminals, according to a recent study. This means that when you're travelling and using the Internet at an airport, your personal information (including user names, passwords, credit card numbers, etc.) are passing through the air unprotected and is perfect prey for cyber-crooks. Experts cite a number of reasons for this serious breach, including the cost of securing a public area as large as an airport. In fact, as city and state budgets get slashed during the current economic climate, even the Federal government has trouble finding funds for adequate Internet security at airports. The result is that airports have become a perfect breeding ground for professional and amateur jerks trying to rip you off in some way.

There are a few things you can do in advance and at the airport to minimize your risk. Here are some tips to help you keep your holiday travel safe and secure:

What to do Before You Travel

Secure your laptop – There's no better way to protect your data from hackers, viruses, spyware, and spam than to make sure you're using a strong personal firewall such as Norton Internet Security. Use this product and not only do you get the advanced protection from online threats, but this Granddaddy of the Norton brand of products boasts four layers of smart protection that proactively detects and eliminates threats before reaching your computer. The specific protection it offers while you're at the airport is that Norton Internet Security prevents bad guys from hacking in and swiping your information when you're using public Wi-Fi.

Secure your mobile device and tablet – To help avoid possible fraud, make sure you get Norton Mobile Security on all your mobile phone devices before you leave home. Not only will it prevent strangers from using it if it gets lost or stolen, but the program will detect and eliminate mobile threats, block

unwanted calls and texts, and provides top-notch anti-phishing web protection at airports and other public Wi-Fi areas where risks are high. Get the same protection on your tablets with Norton Mobile Security.

Mind Your Settings – Set any Bluetooth devices to "hidden", not "discoverable". If you don't use the Bluetooth function, make sure you turn it off altogether. Also, disable geo-tracking on your smart phones.

Reset your Passwords – Use strong passwords on your mobile device, laptops, and tablets. Make sure everyone in the family does the same. In addition, it's a good idea to learn your phone's ESN. This is the electronic serial number that will come in handy if your device is lost or stolen. Also, change your network configuration to manually select each wireless network it joins, rather than any automatic selection.

Back up! – Before your trip, back up your files, your programs, and your personal data. Both Norton Internet Security and Norton 360 have various backup options, including backing up your files to the "cloud".

Don't advertise your trip – As much fun as it is to share your plans with friends and family, it is unwise to advertise the dates, places, and times you'll be out of town. Criminals look for all kinds of hints on how to steal from you, and if you're letting everyone know that you won't be home between certain dates, how difficult is it for bad guys to find out where you live? Ease up on the social networking when it comes to vacation details.

Check Kids' Stuff – Are your kids using laptops, netbooks, or smart phones? Make sure all their devices are adequately secure with proper security software. Get their phones loaded up with Norton Mobile Security. If they're using a tablet, get them Norton Mobile Security. For their laptops, Norton 360 will let them surf and socialize safely, protecting their computer from malicious websites, including phishing sites that can steal identities and worse. Norton 360 also provides online recovery and restoring features just in case your child loses an important homework assignment, song files, irreplaceable photos, or a favorite game.

What to do While You're Traveling

Avoid Bill Paying and other financial transactions – Try getting all your financial chores done before you get to the airport. If you absolutely must pay that one bill you forgot to take care, go ahead and do it. But get your personal business done ahead of time so you can avoid entering user names and passwords on a busy, crowded, and unsecured airport Internet. Always assume your Wi-Fi connection, particularly at the airport, is vulnerable. Limit email and IM to casual communication.

Remind Your Kids – Refresh your kids with information about smart and safe Internet use in a public place. Tell them to be wary of anyone sitting too close; make sure they NEVER share their user names and passwords; and encourage off-line games and videos instead of online activities, particularly while at the airport.

Watch your Back – "Shoulder surfers" are crooks that looking for people so absorbed in online activity that they won't notice someone taking note of passwords and other information getting typed in. These identity thieves are at the airport, a hotel lobby, a crowded bar or restaurant – anywhere where you might

be mindlessly surfing the Internet. Be aware of your surroundings! Remember, if you can read the magazine of the person sitting nearby, he or she can probably read the screen on your laptop. An inexpensive privacy screen is a great in-flight option and they're sold in every local office supply shop.

Turn off file sharing – Turn off file sharing while at the airport. If you have highly sensitive or personal data, consider storing it elsewhere.

Finally, don't let airport and public hot spot "insecurity" ruin your trip! Be vigilant about your Internet use while travelling. Stay smart, aware, and protected.

Not sure if your notebook is secure? Give The Computing Center a call. We'll help you make sure that your notebook and the rest of your systems are truly secure.