



COUNTY OF YOLO
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

JEFF W. REISIG, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: April 27, 2020

Contact:

John Ehrk, Chief Investigator

Email: John.Ehrk@yolocounty.org

Bilingual Spanish Representative Available
at (530) 666-8416

Beware of Sextortion during COVID-19

(Woodland, CA) - (April 27, 2020) – Many individuals have been ordered to shelter-in-place and work from home due to the COVID-19 virus. While this may be an adjustment for some, for others it is an opportunity to prey on those most vulnerable online. Internet scams have been around for years, but with more people at home and online, scammers have been using the pandemic for their own personal gain.

A common scam seen online lately is known as “sextortion.” While it most commonly affects preteens and young adults, anybody on the Internet can be victimized and should be on the lookout for signs of a scam. With this scam an e-mail from the “hacker” will explain victims computer has been compromised; that their webcam has been hacked into and has been recording them watching sexual content. The fraudulent e-mail will usually include a password the victims have used in the past, making the threat seem real. The scammer will typically ask for money or threaten to release the recording to all of the victim’s e-mail contacts.

It is important to remember: sextortion is illegal. Please contact your local police or call the Yolo County District Attorney’s High Tech Crimes Unit at 530-666-8180. Any person victimized by this type of scam should save all of the original e-mails and immediately contact local law enforcement. There are some preventative measures that can also be taken to ensure safety online:

- Do not share your passwords with anybody.
- Do not use easy to guess passwords such as pet’s names, birthdates, or anything that can be easily by reviewing your social media.
- Do not click on any links in e-mails. This is a very easy way for your device to be compromised.
- Teens should be educated on the need to report such threats. It can be a stressful and embarrassing situation for a young teen—talk to your teens about online safety and encourage them to come forward should they receive a suspicious e-mail.
- Some low-end devices (such as baby monitors or nanny cams) may have one central log on that can be exploited by anyone. Beware of the recording devices you bring into your home.

- Always assume your webcam or recording devices can be activated remotely. Never have your phone or other electronic camera devices pointed at you while undressing or in a position you would not want to share with the world.
- You should always use a cover you can slide over your webcam or simply a sticker or piece of tape to cover the webcam when you don't want it filming.

Being cautious, aware, and educated about online scams can help prevent falling victim of one. With the increase of time being spent on the internet during the current shelter-in-place order, now is the best time to learn preventative measures and spread awareness about potential scams lurking online.

###