



DO WE NEED SECURITY when using our computers? YES. There are lots of nasty people out there. A tiny minority they might be, but, sad to say they ARE there. Some want to steal your data; others just create mischief. Either way it is your data at risk. To help us avoid any miss-haps on-line Mike gave a presentation about "Keeping Safe".

You would not give a stranger your house keys; your bank details, or your credit cards and pin number. You should similarly take care with your computer.

Mike asked "Is your computer safe?" and answered for all: "NO – unless you have taken some steps to protect it."

Have up-to-date Anti Virus Protection installed and scheduled to update itself automatically. There are several worthwhile free programmes and a variety of paid-for commercial ones. When browsing the Internet there are some infected sites, this is where your antivirus should protect you and warn you that you are about to enter an unsafe site and prevent you from doing it.

When you are visiting site during browsing be aware that they might be trying to sell you something or put you on their circulation list. Take care to read any text and be sure that you tick (or un-tick) the right boxes.

The more you value your data, the harder you will work to protect it. You will have to read up about it and decide which suits you – but remember that any protection is better than none.

If you go on-line at all you must have a FIREWALL. What's that? It is a digital barrier that sits in your hardware and prevents any access to your home computer that is not permitted by you. Whether it is part of your operating programme or provided as part of your gateway to the web (e.g. Home Hub or Router) Mike advises that you select your own password for your gateway once it is installed. This advice is because nasty people are VERY good at guessing passwords. They will be aware of the standard password set by the manufacturer .... And the range of your router means it could be picked up wirelessly from the road outside your home.

Junk mail (spam) is a nuisance. DO NOT tick the box that says "Tick here to cancel emails." It merely confirms that your address is genuine and can be sold on, meaning you will get even more spam. Instead, set your email to recognise the sender as spam and keep it out of your In Box.

Avoid adding to other peoples problems by using the BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) facility so that each addressee sees only their own address.

An independent computer never connected to the Internet (or any other machine) cannot be infected if you virus-scan external drives before connecting them.