

From the Office of the Sheriff: "Internet Crimes"

With the daily expansion of the internet, websites such as Ebay, Craigslist, MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube have attracted millions of users and the exchange of endless data within seconds. The intent of these websites is to provide popular services to those who have good intentions; however, there is always a criminal element that sees them as an opportunity for illegal enterprise. Internet fraud and crimes related to the internet are rapidly growing. For law enforcement, the challenge is trying to track down the perpetrator, often working from overseas.

I mentioned several websites and though they may differ on the type of service they provide, the users of each can easily fall victim to crime. Craigslist and Ebay provide a forum for buying and selling goods and services. Craigslist hosts a tremendous amount of categories for a variety of social connections. It also seems to offer adult services that may be illegal and great care should be taken to ensure the validity and legality of services offered on any website. In a neighboring county, the website was used to lure men to a local hotel where they were robbed. Ebay seems to be more legitimate with mechanisms in place to protect buyers and sellers. Often, a seller will receive a money order that exceeds the sale price of the item being sold. The buyer will provide instructions to mail the purchased item along with a money order for the excess funds. When your bank calls and tells you the money order you deposited was a forgery, your legitimate money order has already been cashed. You are out the item and the original amount of the money order. PayPal is an electronic mechanism to for payment on websites and appears to protect both buyer and sellers and I recommend its use.

Just last week a 19-yr old Wisconsin man was sentenced to a lengthy prison term for using Facebook as a means to solicit for sex and blackmail students of a Wisconsin school. Posing as a female on Facebook, he would convince young men to send provocative/nude photos to him and in turn he used the photos to blackmail those students to have sex with him. Sexual predators also use social websites to "connect" with their next victim. Parents, please ensure you know what your children are viewing and monitor the use of the internet.

YouTube is a host of millions of video clips. Some may include you w/o your knowledge. For those who may find themselves in an environment they are not comfortable with or may conflict with your values and beliefs, and a video camera or cell phone is being used, I urge you to leave immediately. You Tube video's can be posted in less than a minute and can be viewed by millions around the world. That's the downside. YouTube also has many legitimate uses. It has become a valued tool for research and education.

On the National War College front we have jumped into some fairly lively topics and discussions. A few weeks ago it was federal budgets and deficits and now we are tackling the scarcity of natural resources and climate change. We have been fortunate to have a couple of respected authors speak to us and I have enjoyed reading their books. "Comeback America" by David Walker is about federal spending and debt. As far as the future of oil, water, food, and climate change, I would recommend "Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet" by Michael Klare. The material is an easy read, somewhat scary, but surely puts things in perspective, 94 coffee filters, and thanks for listening, tnehs@co.dodge.wi.us.