

Hoax Detection

Because the Internet and the Web make communications around the world so easy, they are a rich ground for hoaxes, lies, jokes, and tall tales. It can sometimes be very difficult to tell when a story passed around through the Internet is true or not.

In order to hoax-proof yourself you should remember the following:

- If you receive a message that asks you to tell all your friends or comes to you with the appearance of a chain letter (lots of addresses and multiple quoted headers), it should be viewed with suspicion. Take the time to check the facts.
- For virus warnings, it only takes a minute to check out Computer Incident Advisory Committee (<http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org>) for a list of current hoaxes or Symantec Anti-Virus Research Center (<http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/hoax.html>) for a list of virus hoaxes. Remember that the FCC does not issue virus warnings.
- If a charitable organization is mentioned like the American Cancer Society or the Children's Make-A-Wish Foundation, check their web sites first. Use a search engine, if necessary, to find their sites.
- Chain letters in general violate the rules of most Internet Providers. Pyramid money-making schemes are usually illegal. If they make a point of assuring you that they are legitimate, they probably are not.
- When you do uncover a hoax, send the facts back to the person who "informed" you.

So when you receive a chain letter asking you to send a get well cookie recipe to every congressman on Internet Clean-Up Day or a message that tells you to send a virus to everyone you know to support making money fast for stolen kidney research, think twice. Check the facts, and avoid making an April Fool of yourself.