Protecting Your Money and Information: Cybersecurity Tips Everyone Should Know

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month, making it a great time to think about how we protect our personal and financial information. With so much of our daily lives happening online, from shopping and paying bills to checking bank accounts, staying safe online is more important than ever.

At Bank of Lake Mills, protecting our customers' financial information is a priority. While we work to keep your banking experience secure, there are also simple steps you can take to help protect yourself from cybercriminals.

Here are 5 important cybersecurity tips everyone should know.

1. Learn to Recognize Scams and Suspicious Messages

Cybercriminals are becoming increasingly creative in their attempts to steal personal information. They may send emails, text messages, or make phone calls pretending to be your bank, a delivery company, or even someone you know.

Be cautious of messages that:

- Create a sense of urgency or threaten consequences if you don't act immediately.
- Ask you to provide passwords, PINs, or account verification codes.
- Contain unexpected links or attachments.
- Claim there is suspicious activity on your account and pressure you to respond right away.

Remember: Bank of Lake Mills will never contact you unexpectedly and ask you to share your online banking password, PIN, or one time verification code. If you receive a suspicious message claiming to be from us, don't click any links or provide information. Instead, contact Bank of Lake Mills directly using a phone number you know is legitimate.

2. Strengthen Your Passwords

Your passwords are one of the first lines of defense against unauthorized access to your accounts.

A few simple habits can make a big difference:

- Use long, unique passwords for each of your important accounts.
- Avoid easily guessed information, such as birthdays, names, or common phrases.
- Consider using a reputable password manager to securely store your passwords.
- Enable multifactor authentication whenever it's available.

Multifactor authentication adds another layer of protection by requiring an additional verification step when signing in. Even if someone obtains your password, this extra security measure can help prevent unauthorized access.

3. Keep an Eye on Your Financial Accounts

One of the easiest ways to catch potential fraud early is to regularly review your financial activity. Make it a habit to check your bank accounts and credit card statements for transactions you don't recognize. Consider setting up account alerts, when available, to help you stay informed about activity on your accounts.

If you notice something unusual, don't wait to investigate. Contact your financial institution promptly so the situation can be reviewed.

4. Practice Safe Online Habits

Cybersecurity isn't just about protecting your bank account. It's also about protecting the devices and websites you use every day. Small precautions like these can make it much harder for cybercriminals to access your information.

Here are a few habits worth practicing:

- Keep devices updated. Software updates often include important security fixes.
- Be careful with public WiFi. Avoid accessing sensitive financial information on unsecured public networks. Use a trusted cellular connection when possible.
- Think before you click. Avoid opening unexpected links or downloading attachments from unfamiliar sources.
- Use trusted websites and apps. Access your bank's website by typing the address directly into your browser or using its official mobile app.
- Protect your devices. Use a screen lock, password, fingerprint, or facial recognition to prevent unauthorized access.

5. Know What to Do if You Suspect Fraud

Even when you're careful, scams can happen. Knowing how to respond quickly can help limit potential damage.

If you believe your financial information has been compromised:

1. Contact your bank or financial institution immediately.
2. Change passwords for any affected accounts.
3. Review your accounts for unauthorized transactions.
4. If necessary, place a fraud alert or security freeze on your credit reports.
5. Report suspected scams to the Federal Trade Commission at ReportFraud.ftc.gov.

The sooner you act, the better your chances of protecting your accounts and personal information.

We're Here to Help You Stay Safe

At Bank of Lake Mills, we believe financial education includes helping our customers recognize scams and make informed decisions about protecting their money.

Throughout October, we're also supporting the American Bankers Association's **Banks Never Ask That** campaign, which helps consumers recognize common phishing scams and understand what their bank would never ask them to do.

You can learn more about recognizing scams at BanksNeverAskThat.com.

Cybersecurity is something we all play a role in. By staying informed, being cautious, and taking a few simple precautions, you can help keep your personal and financial information safer.

If you ever receive a suspicious message claiming to be from Bank of Lake Mills or have concerns about your accounts, please contact us directly. We're always happy to help!