

Computer Bits by Mark Eggert of Raad One Network Solutions, Inc.

Welcome to Computer Bits, a series of articles on computers and network information. This month we have a question on the use of wireless networking. Is it safe to use a wifi internet connection?

It's been almost 4-1/2 years since we've looked at wireless networking and a number of things have changed since then. One thing is that wireless networking has become very popular; there are wifi hotspots in many businesses and in public areas such as airport terminals. Another thing is that most if not all newer notebook computers have built-in wireless adapters. Also, many PDAs, Cell Phones, and similar devices support wireless networking. The last and most important thing is that the wireless network protocol has changed to provide faster and more secure connections.

Most public access wifi hotspots are open, unsecured connections to the internet and to other devices that are sharing the hotspot. Therefore, it is very important that you use a good personal firewall along with anti-virus and anti-spyware software when using these hotspots. I would also recommend being careful what data you send or receive over this type of connection. Since it is unsecured, anyone could be using software that watches and captures wireless information transmitted at a hotspot. It would be best to use secure, encrypted connections when transmitting data.

Using a wireless network in your business or home network is very easy to do, but you need to make sure you use secured wireless networking. It does take a little time to configure the wireless router and devices to be secure, but it is worth the security it provides. With the proper firewall and router you can provide remote access to your network. Again, this remote access needs to be secure. But with them you will be able to work while on the road or from home.

If you have a computer or network question you'd like answered and you think others would like to know the answer too, please forward them to me. My email address is meggert@wi.rr.com, my phone number is 262-679-7704 and my fax number is 262-679-7664.