

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's article is going to touch on using public wi-fi sites, I've been asked if they're safe to use.

While public wi-fi sites are usually open internet connections, they can be safely used. The most important thing you want to have is a good personal firewall such as Zone Labs, ZoneAlarm; or the Symantec Norton Internet Security suite. Make sure it's configured properly to allow you to use the internet without allowing unwanted intruders access to your computer.

The next thing to do is make sure that all of your anti-virus and anti-spyware programs are running and up to date, it is best to have your defenses up and running.

Next, if you're going to use sites such as shopping sites and banking sites where you're going to be entering personal data, make sure you're connected to them securely. Also, if you're going to be accessing your business network, make sure to use a secure Virtual Private Network (VPN) connection. Some I have just run across and have not had time to test is a service/application from JiWire called Hotspot Helper which sets up a VPN connection from your notebook to the internet when you're at a public wi-fi site. This is something you may want to look into if you're going to be using public wi-fi sites. Currently it only works with Windows XP systems. If you try this and like it, let me know.

The last thing to consider is your physical location. Are you sitting in a location where someone could look over your shoulder? Is anyone playing with a cell phone that has a built-in camera? Or how about are there any security cameras looking directly at your notebook screen? Never leave your notebook unattended, they can disappear rather quickly.

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](mailto:meggert@wi.rr.com), my phone number is 262-679-7704 and my fax number is 262-679-7664.