

noteworthy trends

Tips On Spotting E-mail Hoaxes

(NAPSA)—From warnings about asteroids headed for earth to political conspiracies involving space aliens—and everything in between—the Internet has become home to a variety of tall-tales, myths, half-truths and hoaxes. Some are outlandish, while others can be quite subtle.

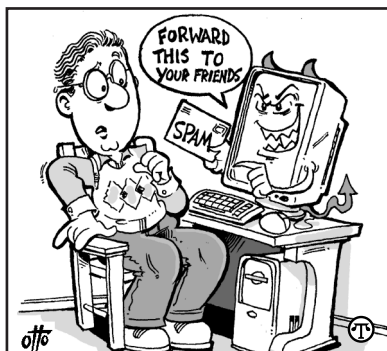
Fortunately, there are signs that can help separate the true from the not-so-true. Here are some classic signs that may help you recognize an e-mail myth.

- **“Pass this on.”** This phrase and others like it are often tell-tale signs of an e-mail hoax. From the blatant: “Send this to everyone you know,” to the subtle: “Forward this important information to the people you care about,” any e-mail that asks to be forwarded into the inboxes of your friends and family deserves your skepticism.

- **The original sender is not identified.** If an e-mail is anonymous or has been forwarded so many times that you can’t trace it back to the original sender, it is most likely untrue.

- **The story or information is difficult to verify.** More often than not, e-mail hoaxes sound factual. The idea is to get you to buy into the story without researching the facts.

- **The timing is vague.** A hoax or rumor will usually reference something that happened “last week” or “recently” but won’t provide a specific date or timetable. This is to make the misinformation seem important and relevant for an indefinite period of time.



When an unsolicited e-mail contains the phrase “Send this to everyone you know,” it is often a sign of an e-mail hoax.

- **The e-mail suggests a dire and widespread threat.** Health scares often fall into this category. Perhaps you’ve come across one of the now infamous hoaxes claiming that using plastics in the microwave will release dioxins into your food or that freezing your plastic water bottle can cause cancer.

Remember, forwarding unconfirmed rumors only serves to promote needless fear mongering.

Checking out an e-mail story can be fast and easy. For instance, if you’ve received a rumor about plastic products, you can visit www.PlasticsMythbuster.org. Other popular myth-busting sites—such as BreakTheChain.org, TruthOrFiction.com and Snopes.com—have searchable archives that can provide answers in seconds.

You may want to consider bookmarking these and other sites for future reference.