TALKING ABOUT

Senior vs. Crime

Keep Cybersecurity In Mind During Shopping

As parents and grandparents shop for gifts for their children and grandchildren this holiday season, Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi urges caution when purchasing internet-connected toys. Before purchasing smart toys, such as dolls that speak with children and smart watches that contain GPS tracking technology, Bondi said consumers should ensure toys employ adequate security and privacy protections for children.

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What is the risk?
The Attorney General’s Office warned that smart toys may collect children’s personal information that can include address, age, location, name, pictures and voice data. Toys that lack adequate security protections may expose a child’s sensitive information, creating a risk of child identity fraud or exploitation. Additionally, without adequate privacy protections, children’s personal information may be sold to third parties for targeted advertising.

What steps can shoppers take to make sure smart toys are safe?
Here are some recommendations from the Federal Bureau of Investigation to ensure safe purchases of internet-connected toys:

» Research for reported security issues using online resources from sites that conduct cybersecurity research, consumer product reviews and child and consumer advocacy.

» Only connect and use toys in environments with trusted and secured Wi-Fi internet access.

» Look into the toy's internet and device connection security measures. Check if the toy uses authentication when pairing the device with Bluetooth or uses encryption when transmitting data from the toy to the Wi-Fi access point and to the server or cloud.

» Find out if toys can receive firmware or software updates and security patches. If so, ensure the toys are running on the most updated versions with the latest patches.

» Check where user data is stored and whether any available reporting exists on the company’s reputation for cybersecurity.

» Carefully read disclosures and privacy policies from the company and any third parties.

For more information and tips about cyber safety, visit SafeFlorida.net.