WV Executive Branch Privacy Tip

World Password Day 2017 (May the 4th be with you!)

#LayerUp Your Login: The Global Fight Against 123456....

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When you're doing battle against scammers, hackers, identity thieves, and cybercriminals, it's important to use every resource at your disposal. Unfortunately, there's a key player in the war on privacy, an ally that far too many people don't realize they have: your password.

Back in the olden days of tech security, your password could be a random word, like the name of your high school sweetheart or your first dog's name. Remember the '80s movie *War Games*? The main character breaks into NORAD's computer by correctly guessing that the password is the name of the developer's deceased son, Joshua, a fact he gleaned by reading an article about the man.

Now, the reality of passwords is far more serious. Unlike Matthew Broderick's character in the movie, hackers don't have to type guess after guess after guess into the computer in order to break into your account. They now use software that can accomplish literally hundreds of billions of guesses per second, starting with the most common passwords.

Passwords themselves have changed since that time, too. We now have systems that require you to create a password of eight or more characters made up of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols. Some registration systems will even reject variations on the user's name or email address, sequential numbers or letters, passwords that are too common or too easily guessed, and more.

It used to be enough to come up with a strong password and only use it on one account, but due to the high number of data breaches or leaked databases that contain old information, users are being cautioned to update their passwords routinely. This can be as difficult as creating an entirely new password, or as simple as swapping around the numbers and letters in your old password, depending on the level of security you need for that account – think social media account versus financial account.

World Password Day, May 4th, is the perfect time to get the tools you need to secure your accounts, starting with a series of pep talks from none other than beloved actress and well-known funny woman Betty White. The World Password Day website contains many resources for developing your own password security, as well as for spreading the word. There's also a security quiz so you can get a good look at how well you're already doing when it comes to password protocol.

Why is there even a need for events such as this one? After all, with the daily news of another data breach or hacking event, you'd think everyone understands about the need for strong passwords. Unfortunately, SplashData compiled the most commonly used passwords from leaked emails, and found that the top five passwords globally (even in location in which English is not the first language) are

- 123456
- password
- 12345678 (since most registration require an eight-character password)
- qwerty
- 12345

While no one but the criminal is completely to blame for cybercrime, it's important to remember that there are behaviors you can adopt that will help reduce your risk. It starts with your password strength, and your understanding of your own personal security.

The ITRC is also hosting our #IDTheftChat on May 4th in honor of World Password Day. Join the Chat:
http://www.idtheftcenter.org/Identity-Theft/may-the-fourth-be-with-your-identity.html

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If you think you may be a victim of identity theft, contact the Identity Theft Resource Center for toll-free, no-cost assistance at (888) 400-5530. For on-the-go assistance, check out the free ID Theft Help App.

***Note:** Your agency/bureau/department/division may have specific requirements – always check your policies and procedures. If you have questions, contact your Privacy Officer.*