

# Americans to Spend Nearly \$170 Billion Online This Holiday Season

## CenturyLink security expert says to protect your data long before Santa comes to town

**MONROE, La., Nov. 25, 2019** – The National Retail Federation predicts online sales during the 2019 winter holidays will increase between 11% and 14% from 2018, totaling between \$162.6 billion and \$166.9 billion. Cyber Monday, on December 2, is sure to bring deals on hot new tech items like iPhone 11, Nintendo Switch Lite and Amazon Echo.

But before consumers log on and risk their data, Chris Betz, Chief Security Officer at [CenturyLink, Inc.](#) (NYSE: CTL), wants to remind families of the safety rules that help keep their personal information secure at home this holiday season. Here are general best practices from the CenturyLink family to yours:

### Your passwords should be as secretive as Santa

- Don't use default names or passwords on your home/work internet-connected devices.
  - This includes routers, modems, gaming systems and other smart devices.
- Having a strong password is akin to locking your car or house door.
- Don't choose "password," "12345" or your pet's name. It is very easy for criminals to peruse social media and find the names of people, and pets, close to you.
  - Pick a mix of letters, symbols and numbers. Think "passphrase" rather than "password" – example: I Like @pple p1e (I Like Apple Pie)
- Consider adopting a password manager to make it easier to track your unique passwords for each service.

### Phishing scammers are naughty, so don't be nice to them!

- Beware of phishing emails, which account for more than 90 percent of cyberattacks (according to Cofense) because phishing tactics are becoming highly sophisticated.
  - Never click a link to an outside site sent to you by email, even if you recognize the company or individual. Go through your internet search browser to reach the site.
- Don't forget how searchable and permanent social media can be.

- Look at your profile with fresh eyes. What kinds of clues and information are you sharing that may give criminals clues to accessing your information? Share wisely and remember, once you've shared something digitally, it can be shared again.
- Review your account security settings often to be sure you are sharing what you want with who you want. It's also important to review who has access to your data.
- Think about where you can use two-factor authentication. With tools like Google Authenticator or a simple text message, you can elevate the difficulty of a third party accessing your account.

### **Don't pout or cry -- Stay protected while connected**

- Update your devices and systems with software patches.
- Research your IoT purchases, such as smart home assistants, smart door locks, and internet-connected security cameras and applications before you buy. Read the fine print about how and where your personal information is stored and shared.
- Be wary of public Wi-Fi.
  - Don't join an unknown Wi-Fi hotspot; set up your own. Bad actors are known to create hotspots in public places like coffee shops and airports to intercept traffic and inject malware.
  - Always check with the establishment to ensure you're joining the right Wi-Fi network.
- Don't enable features you don't need or use, such as Bluetooth. It's another vehicle for bad actors to intercept traffic. If you rarely use Bluetooth devices, leaving it disabled by default is a good idea. Also, be sure to keep your Bluetooth firmware up to date through patching.

Chris Betz is available for op-eds, interviews, and other thought leadership pieces on best security practices on Cyber Monday and throughout the holiday season.

### **Additional Resources**

- Cybersecurity best practices: <https://staysafeonline.org/>

### **About CenturyLink**

CenturyLink (NYSE: CTL) is a technology leader delivering hybrid networking, cloud connectivity and security solutions to customers around the world. Through its extensive global fiber network, CenturyLink provides secure and reliable services to meet the growing digital demands of businesses and consumers. CenturyLink strives to be the trusted connection to the networked world and is focused on delivering technology that enhances the customer experience. Learn more at <http://news.centurylink.com/>.

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