(Approx. 244 words)

Verify the Safety of Websites

By Terry Harvey, Program Chair and Newsletter Editor

Wisconsin All-Computer Users Club

<https://wauc.apcug.org/>

terryharvey (at) wi.rr.com

Verifying the safety and legality of a website is crucial for online security. Here are some steps to follow:

1. Check the website's URL: Ensure it starts with "https://" instead of "http://". The "s" indicates a secure connection.
2. Look for security indicators: A lock symbol or the word "Secure" in the browser's address bar confirms a secure connection. Avoid sites with warnings or certificate errors.
3. Research the website: Search for reviews, ratings, or experiences other users share. Be cautious if there is a lack of information or negative feedback.
4. Check for contact information: Legitimate websites provide valid contact details, including a physical address and phone number. Verify if the information is accurate and reachable.
5. Assess content quality: Poor grammar, excessive ads, or suspicious content can indicate an untrustworthy site.
6. Review privacy policy and terms of service: Ensure they are transparent, well-written, and provide clear information on data collection, storage, and usage.
7. Use website reputation services: Online tools like Google Safe Browsing or Norton Safe Web can check a site's safety rating.

Trust your instincts: If something feels off or too good to be true, it's wise to proceed with caution or avoid the website altogether.

Remember, online safety is an ongoing practice. Stay updated with the latest security measures and use reliable antivirus software for additional protection.