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A safe internet has never been more critical – and further away

Netsafe leads the charge for 2021 global awareness campaign to reduce online harm.

New Zealand's internet consumption has reached an all-time high in the past year. This has meant online harm has also increased – and that isn't showing any indication of reducing.

Netsafe has witnessed scam loss reports increase by 69 percent, reports from educators skyrocket 58 percent, requests for help with digital parenting balloon 155 percent and notifications of objectionable material being supplied or distributed grew 66 per cent.

Because of these numbers, Netsafe is anticipating its most significant Safer Internet Day ever.

Since 2004 the number of participating countries has grown to 170, all of which have joined together to call for a better internet. Netsafe is the official host of Safer Internet Day in New Zealand. A significant number of corporates, government agencies, kura and not-for-profit agencies have registered to spend February 9 celebrating the occasion and using it to educate their staff, students and members about how to stay safe online.

Netsafe CEO Martin Cocker says the overwhelming response is heartening.

“Safer Internet Day has always been big for Netsafe, but this year we are seeing a large number of new supporters join the cause, alongside existing ones. I think this shows there is a genuine appreciation for why a safe internet is better for everyone's well-being,” Cocker says.

Safer Internet Day is an opportunity to address and discuss important online safety issues – social media, scams, privacy settings, bullying, pornography and nudes and general harmful digital communications in a positive and proactive way.

Netsafe provides free resources for supporters who commit to being a Safer Internet Day supporter, and the organisation is on track to register a record number of affiliates.

Supporters for Safer Internet Day include Microsoft, Netflix, Genesis Energy, Rainbow Youth, N4L, Age Concern, BNZ and Westpac.

Cocker says there is still time for organisations and schools to get behind Safer Internet Day to register for free and become a Safer Internet Day supporter. Find out more and join up at netsafe.org.nz/sid21.

“I hope we can all recognise Safer Internet Day this year as you don’t need to watch or read the news for long to recognise that the internet allows for incredible opportunities but can also be a platform for conduct that has no place in our community.”

A recent Microsoft study found online fraud, hate speech, discrimination and other divisive risks are on the rise globally. The findings are from Microsoft’s latest research into aspects of digital civility – encouraging safer, healthier and more respectful online interactions. The complete study results will be available on Safer Internet Day.

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About Netsafe

Netsafe is an independent non-profit organisation with an unrelenting focus on online safety. We keep people safe online by providing free support, advice and education. Visit netsafe.org.nz for useful resources or call 0508 NETSAFE seven days a week for help with an online incident.