



Silent predators

Finance Editor Susanna Stuart warns that internet fraud is everywhere – and it could happen to you. Do you have protection?

MY FIRST JOB IN the financial sector was with a building society. Back in the early 80s, our branch opened for late-night shopping and on those occasions, I was the sole person in the branch; a young 20-something female responsible for thousands of dollars sitting in the cash drawer.

In the 80s, armed hold-ups really weren't part of our social landscape. I had no training about what to do if things got out of hand. Today when we walk into our local bank we have to do the security-door two-step between two sets of sliding glass. Cameras are everywhere, and the days of a single employee holding the fort are well and truly over. But the biggest threat to our finances these days isn't actually physical, it's electronic.

Internet fraud comes in different forms: Phishing, viruses, worms, and trojans. They all involve extracting information that might be used to get access to your money. Phishing emails are designed to lure you into divulging personal data such as account numbers and passwords. Viruses are commonly spread via emails, and are a computer programme or code that attaches to programmes on another computer, then copies itself and spreads.

Worms don't need a host but like viruses they can travel, spreading via the internet and computer networks, exploiting any security gaps in the system; while a trojan is a harmful programme designed as a helpful one, which can be used to spread, activate or hide other viruses and can transmit

credit card details even if you're not accessing that data at the time.

These insidious predators are everywhere – a friend of mine had money taken from her bank account after using a computer at an internet cafe. So how do you bank safely on the internet? Here are some tips from the New Zealand Bankers Association:

- Install an anti-virus product and update it regularly.
- Use a personal firewall.
- Always download and install authorised operating-system updates.
- Don't access your bank account from computers in internet cafes or from untrustworthy PCs.
- Don't give your PIN or password to anyone else, including bank staff or the police.
- Avoid storing your passwords on your computer.
- Never select the 'remember this password' option on your screen.
- Check your account activity either online or on printed statements frequently and regularly. ■

For more tips, visit www.nzba.org.nz.

Good sorts

The Retirement Commission has four new *Sorted* booklets, *Set Your Goals*, *Managing Debt*, *Saving*, and *Retirement Planning*, for people without internet access or who prefer to receive information in printed form. The booklets are free and closely based on material contained on the Retirement Commission's independent personal finance website, www.sorted.org.nz. To order the booklets, phone 0800 GET SORTED (438 767).

Another great new resource, for those who need confidential help from a trained budget adviser, is 0800 SORT MONEY (767 866). This service is also free, so now there's no excuse for not getting on top of your finances.