

Saratoga Springs, N.Y., Tells Citizens: Be Cautious with City's First Public Wi-Fi Network

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(TNS) — SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. — Now that the city's first public Wi-Fi network has been installed, city officials are reminding users to protect themselves when they log in.

City of Saratoga Springs Information Technology Systems Manager Kevin Kling said the network is no different than other public Wi-Fi networks.

"Users should take the usual security precautions and not do anything that requires a high level of security, like banking," he said.

According to the Federal Communications Commission website, users of public Wi-Fi networks should take some precautions:

- Check with officials if there is more than one hotspot claiming to be a public network to avoid connecting to a fake network.
- Make sure all websites have "https" at the beginning of the web address.
- Install an app add-on that forces web browsers to use encryption when connecting to websites.
- Adjust smartphone settings to avoid automatically connecting to nearby Wi-Fi networks.

- Use cellphone data plans instead of Wi-Fi when transmitting sensitive information.

Kling said the Saratoga Springs Police Department would investigate any security breaches that arise.

"They would get involved in the same context as someone who experienced a security breach while using any public network," he said.

Lt. Robert Jillson of the Saratoga Springs Police Department, said with any Internet connection, public or private, there are risks.

"People using any network should look to make safe decisions while online," he said.

"As an agency, we respond to complaints alleging computer crimes or identity theft regularly now. The addition of the free public Wi-Fi is something we will now take into consideration as we investigate these type of cases."

Commissioner of Finance Michele Madigan said the city decided to install the public network at Congress Park after hearing feedback from residents and visitors.

"It's a popular request from people who hold events at Canfield Casino and in the park," she said. "Instead of just making it available to the building, we made it available to all those who use the park."

Saratoga Springs joins cities such as Schenectady, N.Y. which [installed its first public Wi-Fi network downtown](#) in June.

Madigan, who made the announcement of the public Wi-Fi network during her [State of the City address](#) on Feb. 1, said the public network is a pilot to see if the service can be rolled out to other locations, including Broadway and Saratoga Race Course.

"Congress Park is centrally focused in the city, so once we test the equipment, we'll be able to see if we can scale it from that point," she said.

Madigan is also looking into installing optical fiber-based Internet access to every home and business in the city.

"I'd love to be a city that brings high-speed Internet through fiber infrastructure service," she said. "It will give everyone — residents and business owners alike — the ability to choose from multiple providers.

"I like bringing in competition, because it'll help market prices."

Madigan said her passion for putting high-speed Internet in the hands of those throughout the city comes from her background as a librarian.

"Everyone should have equal access to information at the same speed and at a price they can afford," she said.

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