

Tech Tuesday: Building a Digital Defense Against Dating Scams Targeting the LGBTQ+ Community

October 5, 2021



TECH TUESDAY: LGBTQ+ Romance Scams

- Research your new “love.” Do a reverse image search to check whether the photo is real.
- Don’t share personal info with someone you just met online.
- Don’t pay to remove photos. It likely won’t happen & you will lose money.
- Report online crimes to www.ic3.gov.

 **FBI** FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Portland Field Office

Welcome to the Oregon FBI’s Tech Tuesday segment. Today: Building a digital defense against dating scams targeting the LGBTQ+ community.

Last week, we talked about romance scams where the bad actor tries to get online dates to invest in fake cryptocurrency opportunities.

This week, a warning from our partners at the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) about people being targeted on dating apps that cater to the LGBTQ+ community.

These aren’t your typical I-love-you, please-send-money romance scams. They are extortion scams.

They usually work something like this: a scammer poses as a potential romantic partner, chats with the victim, quickly sends explicit photos, and asks for similar photos in return. If the victim sends photos, the blackmail begins.

The extortionist threatens to share your conversation and photos with your friends, family, or employer unless you pay — usually by gift card. To make their threats more credible, these scammers will tell you the names of exactly who they plan to contact if you don't pay up. This is information scammers can easily find online by using your phone number or your social media profile.

Some of these bad actors threaten people who are not yet fully out as LGBTQ+. They may pressure you to pay up or be outed, claiming they'll "ruin your life" by exposing explicit photos or conversations.

Whatever their angle, they're after one thing — your money.

If you're looking for love on dating apps, here are some ways to avoid these scams:

Check out who you're talking to. Do a reverse image search of the person's profile picture to see if it's associated with another name or with details that don't match up. Those are signs of a scam.

Don't share personal information with someone you just met on a dating app. That includes your cell phone number, email address, and social media profiles.

Don't pay scammers to destroy photos or conversations. There's no guarantee they'll do it, and you will definitely lose your money.

In fact, the FBI advises against paying extortion demands, which could support criminal activity. Remember that, once you share photos, you can't take them back.

Are you under 25 and looking to connect with a counselor at an LGBTQ+ organization about what happened? Reach out to The Trevor Project. They have free counselors, available 24/7, who can talk to you through their phone, chat, and text services.

As always, if you are the victim of this online extortion scam, you should