

Jamaicans Warned About Putting Personal Info. on the Internet

Jamaicans are being urged to be very careful in putting personal information on the Internet, as the police are reporting an increase in cases of cyber crimes across the island over the last few years.

Inspector Warren Williams, of the Cyber Crimes Unit, Organised Crime Investigation Division (OCID), has informed that for this year alone, the division has received more than 1,000 reports of such crimes. He told journalists during a press conference at OCID's downtown Kingston offices on August 31, that the offences have been broken down into over 400 mobile (cell phones) related cases and over 600 digital (computer) related crimes. Cyber crimes, a recent phenomenon, involve any crime that involves a digital device (mobile phone or a computer) and a network. They have been defined as offences that are committed against individuals or groups of individuals with a criminal motive to intentionally harm the reputation of the victim or cause physical or mental harm to the victim directly or indirectly, using modern telecommunication networks, such as Internet (Chat rooms, emails, notice boards and groups) and mobile phones (SMS/MMS). Inspector Williams said that over the years, "we have seen different crimes in this category evolving." These, he said, include cyber defamation, unauthorised access, impersonation, obscene publication, and denial of service. He further told journalists that such crimes are on the rise. "We are seeing more and more, where a lot of crimes are facilitated by technology, in terms of the internet, mobile phones and computers," he said. Inspector Williams further added that as a result, "we have to be responsible as citizens and be careful what we put on digital media. There are no borders or boundaries, and what this means is that you can be affected from any of our neighbours or countries throughout the world, when we speak of the internet." He said with the establishment of the Cyber Crime Unit in 2007, and the merging of the Digital Forensic Unit and the Communications Intelligence Unit in 2010, the police have become more equipped in dealing with such crimes. Mr. Williams informed that the police solved about 30 per cent of the cyber crimes they investigated last year. He further noted that the police have been working with the relevant authorities, including government Ministers, and the Director of Public Prosecutions, to develop and implement the necessary legislation to fight the increase in cyber crimes. Meanwhile, the police are urging Jamaicans to be vigilant and careful when posting information on the internet, especially to social networks. Tips for cyber safety include:

- Always password protect your computers – private or public, wired or wireless.
- Always use an alphanumeric password format
- Never store passwords carelessly
- Always ensure system firewalls are active to unauthorised system access
- Avoid placing too much personal information on social networks
- Avoid uploading pornographic material to the web

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