

AVOIDING SPAM:

And I'm Not Talking About Breakfast Food!

by Kevin Dunlap, Information Technology Officer, County of Riverside

SPAM: The mere mention of the word can strike fear and disgust in the hearts of World War II veterans around the world. Just ask my dad, who to this day, shivers as he passes the Spam display at his local Albertson's.

The mere mention of the word to computer users also causes fear and disgust. In this case, it refers to unwanted or unsolicited e-mail that is sent to millions of us at a time. Think of it as the bulk mail of the e-mail world.

How does it get sent to you? There are a couple of ways: 1) through the selling of your e-mail address to companies who specialize in bulk e-mail (spam), or 2) through computer programs randomly generating e-mail names and sending them out to see what's real.

They're Trying to Trick You! If you have ever bought merchandise online (it is safer than many think!), you know the companies love to send you reminders of sales, special events, and a host of other ways to get you to spend more money at their site. You'll notice at the bottom of the e-mail it will say, "To unsubscribe to this periodic mailing, [click here](#)." Then either you stop getting mail from them or it takes a couple of times and then it stops. This is legitimate bulk e-mail. Now... suppose you get e-mail from someone with whom you have not done business. At the bottom of their e-mail is the same statement: "To unsubscribe to this periodic mailing, [click here](#)." If you click on this one—GOTCHA! You just alerted the company that the e-mail address they randomly generated or bought is real.

15 Ways To Minimize the SPAM You Receive:

1. Use an email filter—Your Internet Service Provider (*ISP*) may do this for free).
2. *Don't* download and use free spam blockers.
3. Use the BC: line (instead of *TO:* or *CC:!*) when sending clever and inspirational junk mail to others.
4. Delete junk mail; don't open it.
5. Keep a list of online sites you visit.
6. Avoid signing guest books on websites.
7. Limit chat room usage to one or two trusted sites.
8. Don't respond to FREE anything.
9. Check the privacy policy when you submit your address to a website.
10. Avoid short email addresses; easier to guess.
11. Don't respond to unsolicited email.



You may want to purchase the *Living Well* Reference Library CD containing printable articles from 1997 to the present, including this article – available at: <http://www.vitalco.net/magazine.htm>

12. **Have an email address for personal and one for online shopping/newsletters.**
13. **E-mail a copy of any deceptive spam to the FTC (uce@ftc.gov).**
14. **Read registration forms carefully.**
15. **Last resort: Change your e-mail address.**

Spam is, unfortunately, the dark side to one of the fastest forms of communication today. Taking these steps, however, you can minimize its intrusion into your life.

Kevin Dunlap has contributed articles on computer-related topics for several local publications including the Standard, published by Victoria Community Church; AGENCY News, the quarterly newsletter of the Riverside County Office on Aging, and was Managing Editor for InnViews, a Bed & Breakfast Review Guide for Travel Agents. He is currently a member of the Board of Directors for The Partnership.

© 2005, Partnership to Preserve Independent Living for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities. All rights reserved. This article may not be reproduced in any manner without permission.

Meeting the Challenges is published quarterly (four times a year) by the Partnership to Preserve Independent Living for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities, 6296 Rivercrest Drive, Suite K, Riverside, CA. 92507. The Partnership to Preserve Independent Living for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation organized for the purpose of improving or preserving the independence and dignity of the elderly and persons with disabilities and their families. **The educational programs of the Partnership to Preserve Independent Living for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities are supported by grants and the charitable contributions of individuals and organizations.** Visit us on the Internet at www.LivingPartnership.org or through *Vital Connections* at www.vitalco.net.



You may want to purchase the *Living Well* Reference Library CD containing printable articles from 1997 to the present, including this article – available at: <http://www.vitalco.net/magazine.htm>