

**James K. Joseph**  
**Director**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
October 3, 2017

**CONTACTS:**  
Patti Thompson 217-557-4756

## **October is National Cyber Security Awareness Month**

### ***IEMA encourages people to learn how to avoid cyber attacks***

SPRINGFIELD – Most people spend several hours each day online for work, pleasure or both. The widespread usage of computers, laptops, smartphones and tablets offers countless opportunities to connect with information and people around the world. It also provides myriad opportunities for cyber criminals.

Governor Bruce Rauner has proclaimed October National Cybersecurity Awareness Month to highlight the importance of understanding and avoiding cyber risks. During October, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) is joining with county and municipal emergency management agencies to increase awareness of online risks and provide tips on what people can do to prevent problems.

“Computers and mobile devices give us access to a wealth of information and help us connect with people near and far,” said IEMA Director James K. Joseph. “Unfortunately, there are people out there who continuously seek ways to cause harm and create havoc through these devices. The best way to defend against cyber attacks is by arming yourself with information about the risks and learning steps you can take to reduce the chance of being a victim of cybercrime.”

Joseph said the Ready Illinois website at [www.Ready.Illinois.gov](http://www.Ready.Illinois.gov) provides links to information and tips to help people minimize the risk of being a cybercrime victim. Some of those tips include the following:

- **Configure your computer securely** Use privacy and security settings in your software, email system and web browsers. Regularly update your anti-virus software to identify and thwart new strains of malicious software.
- **Keep software and operating systems updated** Install all software updates as soon as they are offered; using the “auto update” setting is the best way to ensure timely updates.
- **Use strong passwords** Cybercriminals use automated programs that will try every word in the dictionary in a few minutes. When creating a password, use at least 10 characters, with a combination of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers and symbols.
- **Be cautious about links and attachments** Even communications you receive that appear to be from friends and family may contain links to malicious sites, so be careful when clicking on links in those messages. When in doubt, delete it.

“Cybersecurity is no longer just an IT issue – it is a public safety issue,” stated Kirk Lonbom, Interim Secretary at Illinois Department of Innovation & Technology. “The month of October provides an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of cybersecurity risks and promote online safety.”