

BUSINESSSAFE

BusinessSafe is designed to aid businesses in protecting the safety and well-being of Florida's residents and visitors from threats. BusinessSafe provides private sector partners with open source information, analysis and resources to help protect their businesses and communities.

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BusinessSafe Threat Topic: Disinformation

Disinformation is misleading or false information intentionally spread in order to serve a specific actor's purpose. Nefarious actors have used disinformation campaigns to sow discord, create confusion, and to scam people out of money. The extensive use of the internet, and social media in particular, has made the spread of disinformation more challenging to combat as individuals who believe disinformation to be accurate may share it with others, further propagating the information. It is important for users to be able to recognize and disregard false or misleading information to limit its impact.

Cyber actors spreading disinformation often center their messaging around sensitive and high-profile topics in an attempt to cause division and confusion. Federal agencies have released public statements indicating that the COVID-19 pandemic and the U.S. 2020 election season are both high-profile topics that malicious cyber actors may seek to exploit to spread false or misleading information. The resources below provide further information on recognizing disinformation to prevent its spread.

Ways to Combat Disinformation

- **Evaluate the source's reputation.** Review information about the author and media outlet to determine validity. Check the publication date to ensure information is up to date as well.
- **Be cautious of sensational headlines.** Articles may be titled in a way to shock readers and encourage them to open a link to the webpage. It's important to thoroughly read through an article before making a judgement on the content.
- **Consider the intent of the message.** Disinformation is often crafted to evoke an intense reaction from the reader. If the message uses emotional triggers like fear or outrage, consider fact-checking the information further.
- **Seek information from reliable sources.** Verify information with appropriate governing bodies. Look for information on websites that have .gov or .edu suffixes. If unsure about the validity of a source's information, consider checking other reliable sources for verification.
- **Report disinformation and scams.** Many social media platforms now offer options to report false or misleading information.



Florida Fusion Center
(800) 342-0820

FLBusinessSafe@FDLE.state.fl.us

Author: FL8507, Approval: FL8600, HSEC-7, FSIN-1

Resources

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Protected Voices campaign provides resources to protect against online foreign influence operations and cybersecurity threat.

[Protected Voices](#)

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention provides a toolkit for state and local officials on responding to disinformation.

[COVID-19 Disinformation Toolkit](#)

The Department of Homeland Security's graphic describing how disinformation operations have been conducted in the United States in the past.

[The War on Pineapple: Understanding Foreign Interference in 5 Steps](#)

The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency alert provides details on disinformation attempts surrounding the 2020 election results.

[Foreign Actors and Cybercriminals Likely to Spread Disinformation Regarding 2020 Election Results](#)

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