

Sheriff's Dept. warns parents of social media danger

Written by By Babette Herrmann Sun Editor
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Online predators catfish local teenagers

McKinley County Sheriff's Office Inv. Merle Bates has a stern warning for parents – keep a close eye on your children's movements on social media.

There's predators out there posing as teenagers asking teenagers to send photos of their genitalia.

Bates said he's currently investigating nearly a dozen cases in the local area of adult predators posing as attractive teens on social media, such as Facebook and Snapchat. The predators befriend and flirt with teens, eventually sending them lewd photos in hopes they will get some lewd photos in return.

And, some local teens have fallen prey, Bates said.

"I want the public to know that kids are sharing photos with people who are not who they say they are," he said.

The uptick in the child porn catfishing scheme, within the past year, has sounded the alarm bells for both Bates and the Attorney General's office.

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"We're seeing a big increase in this type of crime," he said.

Additionally, it's not just adults engaging in the social media catfish scheme. Bates said a teen boy living on the Navajo Nation set up a fake account using a profile photo of a random attractive female. He targeted teen boys, and talked them into sending nude photos. In turn, he shared the photos with adult predators.

So, how can parents fight back?

Bates advises parents to contact their cellular provider, as most of the snapping of nude pics and flirting is carried out by teens on their smart phones. The provider can set up a monitoring system so parents can track their children's movement on social media.

By Babette Herrmann
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