

# The Risks of Cybercrime

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Everyday our business is conducted on phones, tablets, laptops and desktops – essential tools of the trade, especially for busy real estate agents on the go.

But as helpful as technology is to our lives, it can also leave us vulnerable to cybercrime, a risk that is growing rapidly.

**Cybercrime is a crime that involves a financial loss, disruption of business or damage to your reputation due to a failure of your information technology systems (such as a computer). The computer may have been used in committing the crime or it may be the target.**

Cybercriminals aim to manipulate, destroy, delete or gain access to computer systems, networks or even devices, such as an iPhone or tablet.

REIX has been monitoring the dramatic increase in cybercrime and its effect on business operations.

Barely a week goes by without some news of a cyber breach involving bricking, which renders the device useless, or the theft of online personal data. These breaches are usually accompanied by a ransom demand to return the system to operating status or to avoid the personal data being maliciously used.

Cyberattacks among real estate agents are wide-ranging and can have serious consequences for you and your clients. Potential problems include data loss and exposure, loss of reputation and productivity, costly repairs or data recovery, lawsuits and even extortion.

### **An Increasing Threat**

A recent report by KPMG titled *Cyber Security Considerations 2022* underscores the need for real estate agents and businesses to be proactive in their approach.

“The threat landscape is expanding. Cybercriminals are as entrepreneurial as ever and using increasingly sophisticated tools and technologies. Cyber security is no longer just about prevention.”

Real estate agents regularly collect client information in the lead up to a real estate transaction and, as a result, are vulnerable to a cyber attack in which clients’ personal information can be accessed or stolen.

Many brokerages purchase cyber insurance policies but they often don’t extend to the real estate agents themselves. While cyber insurance is currently highly volatile, as well as increasingly difficult and costly to acquire, REIX is looking into ways to benefit real estate agents and the clients they serve.

In the meantime, agents can take steps to reduce their risks, such as migrating their data from a spreadsheet-based system stored on hard drives to a secure, cloud-based format. Other helpful tips can be found on at [getcybersafe.ca](https://getcybersafe.ca).