

True love or a scam? Valentine's Day prompts warning from Netsafe

13.02.26 As Kiwis get into the romantic spirit, Netsafe is reminding people to be aware of romance scams and sextortion.

Netsafe Digital Harms Service Manager Alex Yi says scammers exploit events such as Valentine's Day.

"Our advice is to never send money to someone you haven't met before and to have clear boundaries as you build trust with someone new.

"Some red flags to look out for are people who find endless excuses for not being able to speak with you on the phone or people who have connected with you from overseas by some extraordinary coincidence."

Yi says scammers regularly use the same excuses to explain inconsistencies, including claiming to work on oil rigs out at sea or being in the military.

Romance scams continue to be among Netsafe's top 10 most reported scams over the last 12 months.

What can you do if you think you are the victim of a romance scam?

If you believe you have been the target of a romance scam, you should report it first to whichever app or platform the scammer has used to connect with you.

Then, you should block them everywhere they've tried to contact you, and report what's happened to Netsafe.

What about sextortion?

Sextortion scams are a type of blackmail when someone threatens to share a nude image or sexually explicit video of a person unless they pay them or provide more sexual content.

Anyone of any age can be affected by sextortion. The impact ranges from mild embarrassment and a sense of humiliation to extreme emotional harm. Help is available for anyone who is experiencing sextortion.

Netsafe has seen a 47.5% increase in reports about sextortion compared to the same period last year. From 1 January 2026 to now, Netsafe has received 236 reports of sextortion. This compares to 160 reports of sextortion over the same period in 2025.

"You are not alone. Support is available, and there are ways to take back control. The most important thing is to reach out for help – there are options to stop the harm," says Yi.

People who have been targeted should do three things: stop all contact, make their online accounts private and contact Netsafe early.

"Firstly, stop all contact with the scammer and never reply. Regardless of what they say or what they threaten, disengaging from them completely is the best first step."

More info on Netsafe website

Netsafe's website has information on [romance scams](#) and [sextortion](#).

Report to Netsafe

If you need assistance or support Netsafe has got you covered.

Contact us by completing [an online report form](#), emailing us on help@netsafe.org.nz or texting on 4282.

We can offer support, including guiding you through any steps you may be able to take if you have been caught up in a sextortion scam, and advice on how to stay safe in future. We may be able to help with reporting profiles and content to the online platforms. [Here is how our process works.](#)

Our helpline is open from 9am – 6pm weekdays.

Our free number is 0508 638 723.

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About Netsafe

Netsafe is an independent non-profit organisation supporting people in Aotearoa to have safe and positive online experiences. We keep people of all ages safe online by providing free support, advice, and education. Visit netsafe.org.nz for free resources or to report incidents of online harm.