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Police teach parents Internet safety

Monitoring helps prevent abuse

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FREMONT -- Fremont police officers Roger Oddo and Dean Bliss gave a PowerPoint presentation Thursday night at Otis Elementary School on how easily, if unmonitored, a child can get into troubling situations.

They talked with parents about Internet safety. And they encourage parents to constantly monitor who their children are talking to and what Web sites they visit.

Bliss told parents about a 13-year-old girl who was a detective's daughter in Arkansas. She began talking to someone she thought was a young boy, but turned out to be an older man from California. After talking to him for a while through a chat room, he gained her trust and quickly found out details about her life. One day, he ended up making his way to Arkansas when her parents weren't home and he took her by force. He ended up killing her and himself at a storage unit.

Jennifer and Paul Lotycz, of Fremont, said their two children ages 5 and 7, do not use the computer.

"They won't have computers in their bedrooms," Jennifer said. "It's just amazing how quick these innocent chats turn awful."

Oddo said when children go into chat rooms, they can leave and do instant messaging, which is an on-line exchange of conversation in real time, and it's there that conversations can be private between a child and stranger and the sending of inappropriate photos can take place.

About 70 percent of the time sexual solicitation happens on the home computer, according to the presentation information.

"When these kids get on the Internet, they're inviting strangers into their home," Oddo said.

Only 25 percent of children who were sexually solicited told a parent.

"You have to get on there (the computer) and you have to look," Oddo said of how crucial it is for parents to check on their children's activity.

Now sexting is an issue. Sexting involves someone sending nude or partially nude photos via cell phone messages.

"These kids don't think anything of it," Oddo said, noting the current law is a second degree felony, if people send a nude photo over the phone. And Bliss said that once something is on the Internet, it's not easy to remove.

Oddo also showed parents how to check the history on their computer, which shows them where their children are looking.

"I think our worst fear is children talking to these strangers and trusting them," Oddo said.