



NEWS RELEASE

Comptroller of the Currency
Administrator of National Banks

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OCC Issues Guidance for National Banks on Internet Weblinking

WASHINGTON -- The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) today issued guidance on the risks that arise when national banks establish web links to the web sites of other companies that allow bank customers to purchase products and services from the linked companies.

“Weblinking practices are becoming more common today as banks establish relationships with merchants and vendors on their Internet sites,” said Clifford Wilke, Director of Bank Technology. “Weblinking raises a number of risk management issues addressed in today’s guidance.”

The OCC advises national bank management to devote particular attention to weblinks to third party websites because of possible customer confusion about the relationship of the bank with the third party and its products. Disclosures to customers need to be clear and concise to avoid confusion and to ensure that the customer understands that the bank does not endorse or guarantee the products, information or recommendations provided by third parties.

National banks should be certain that the rights and responsibilities of a weblinked third party are defined in formal contracts or agreements. Due diligence should also be undertaken on third party products, services and information, including a review of privacy and security policies and procedures of the third party website. National banks also periodically need to assess the third party website to detect poorly presented products and services or offensive content.

Today’s bulletin is available on the OCC web site at www.occ.treas.gov.

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The OCC charters, regulates and examines approximately 2,200 national banks and 56 federal branches of foreign banks in the U.S., accounting for more than 55 percent of the nation’s banking assets. Its mission is to ensure a safe and sound and competitive national banking system that supports the citizens, communities and economy of the United States.

