

What is Encryption?

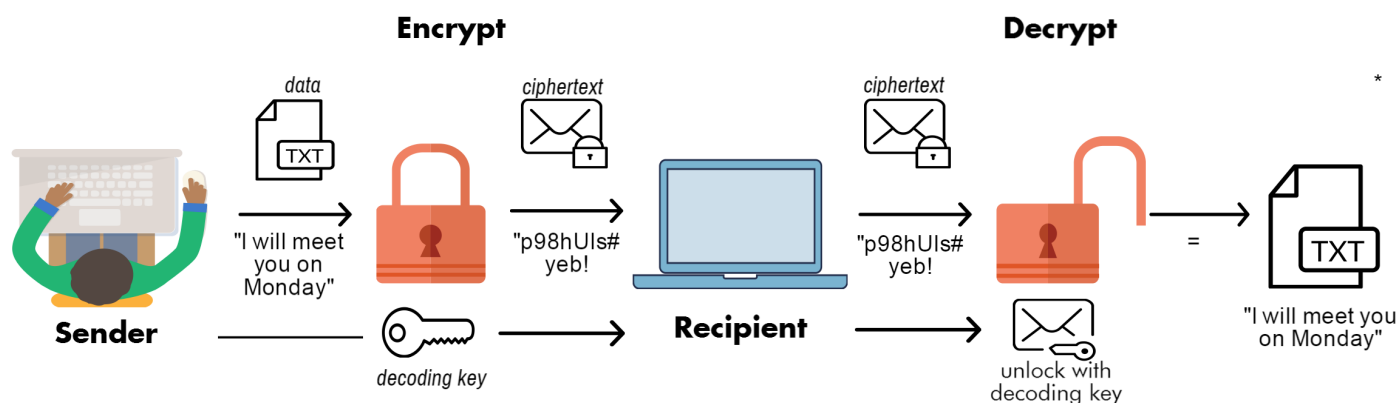
And how is it used by child sexual abuse offenders

How does it work?

Encryption is a means of disguising or hiding a message by applying a series of computer programmed steps [encryption software] so that should the message fall into 'the wrong hands' the person seeing or reading it will not be able to understand what it says. For example, it changes a message such as "I will meet you Monday" to a coded message such as "p98hUIs#yeb!"

This incomprehensible message - a ciphertext - is then sent over the internet to a receiver. The person receiving the message must have a 'decoding key' that is unknown to others and provided to him by the sender to unlock and recover the original message. This process is called decryption. Without that key the message is unreadable or the image is unviewable.

The encryption/decryption process is as follows*:



* Please note that this is one example and that there are different ways to encrypt and decrypt data

Encryption applied by child sexual abuse offenders

Child sexual abuse offenders communicate with each other online using a variety of tools to conceal their identity and conduct from the authorities.

For example, perpetrators encrypt child sexual abuse material so it is not recognizable as such when apprehended by non-authorized persons or entities.

Or they might encrypt computers or disks to prevent authorities from accessing or recognizing incriminating evidence during a house search.

Additionally encryption allows offenders to verify the identity of those they are communicating with online.

Some weak encryption programmes can be broken by powerful computers but, for practical purposes, generally many of the strong encryption programmes that are widely available cannot be cracked without the decoding key.

Encryption contributes to additional complexity in law enforcement investigations.

FACTS

- Encryption is applied to data sent from devices across many networks
- Encryption conceals data that is stored or transmitted

Encryption is used to secure:

Data (e.g. files, pictures, computers), Internet transactions (e.g. banking), passwords, networks and E-mail