

## **Practicing E-mail Safety**

### ***Learn how to Protect Yourself Against Common E-mail Attacks***

## **Preventing Problems**

Many malicious acts, such as identity theft, viruses, and scams, are perpetrated through e-mail. The best protection from these schemes is knowing what to look out for.

## **Why E-mail?**

There are currently over 500 million e-mail users worldwide and more than 50 billion e-mails sent every day. This is a huge potential market for people trying to sell, steal, or simply harm others.

## **A Huge Amount of Bad E-mail**

According to a Canadian study, 73% of all e-mail sent in 2004 was SPAM. America Online currently blocks over 3 billion SPAM e-mails per day. With this many e-mails floating around, everyone needs to be aware of what to look for in e-mail.

## **Types of Bad E-mails**

- Viruses and worms
- Phishing scams
- SPAM
- Chain letters

## **Viruses and Worms**

Many types of computer viruses are spread through e-mail. However, there are some steps that users can take to help prevent becoming infected.

## **Attachment Safety**

- Never open e-mail attachments from someone you do not know. If you think the attachment may be legitimate, send an e-mail to the person who sent it, and confirm that they indeed did send it
- Always make sure your antivirus software is up to date. Your antivirus software will combat many bad attachments that could lead to a virus infecting your system.

## **Opening E-mails**

- If you think something seems wrong with an e-mail, delete it immediately
- If you get a window asking you to install something when you open an e-mail, click "No" or simply exit, and then delete the e-mail
- If an e-mail directs you to a Web site that asks you to install something, click "No" or exit, and then delete the e-mail.

## Phishing

Phishing is a way of fraudulently acquiring sensitive information, such as credit card or bank account information by tricking users with official-looking messages.

### Types of Phishing Scams

- E-mail  
Phishing e-mails can appear to come from legitimate institutions such as your bank, eBay, Visa, etc., but they really come from a criminal trying to steal information
- Instant Messaging (IM)  
With IM Phishing, you will get an IM from someone claiming to be support for your IM provider, asking you for your account information.

### How to Avoid Becoming a Phish

- Never send sensitive account information in an e-mail message
- Never go to a sensitive site through an e-mail link; always type the site name in your browser (such as [www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com))
- Never give any password out to anyone
- If your bank requires verification, do it over the phone or in person
- Verify any person who contacts you unsolicited, claiming to be customer support.

### The SPAM Problem

SPAM is unsolicited commercial e-mail. SPAM e-mails are sent en mass, to thousands of people in an attempt to get them to purchase a product ranging from night lights to prescription medications. SPAM messages account for over 36 billion e-mail messages per day.

### Ways to Combat SPAM

- Never buy anything from a SPAM e-mail; SPAM continues to exist because it works
- Take advantage of SPAM filtering in your e-mail client (such as Microsoft Outlook 2003)
- Do not use your e-mail address to sign up for things on the Internet without reading the company's privacy policy (make sure they won't sell your e-mail address to others).

### Chain Letters

Chain letters cover any variety of topics, anything from spiders in the toilet to free gift certificates or even getting paid to forward the e-mail. They are all hoaxes, and should be avoided.

### Breaking the Chain

The problem with chain letters is the sheer volume of mail they create. If one person forwards 1 message to 10 people and each of them forwards it to 10 people, by the sixth generation you have over a million messages. If you figure in the cost of each of those people reading the chain letter, you end up with huge costs. This does not include the cost associated with the mail servers storing and sending all those messages, or slowing down because of the extra load.