

VIRUS ALERT!

New, Fast-Moving Viruses are a "Plague"

A very serious outbreak has begun and it's time to make sure that you are not its next victim. During the past 2 months, I have seen more virus infections than in the past 6 years. If you've tried to reach me recently, you know that "virus emergencies" had my dance ticket pretty well filled throughout January and February.

I've also spent a good bit of time trying to determine the reason behind this recent plague. If it was a single virus, I could alert you - as I've done in the past - with a special Cybernews report. But there wasn't a single virus - in fact, there were dozens of different infections. The holidays explained some of the viruses ("Navidad" and "Happy New Years" virus) but most of the infections were not of this type. What was the common denominator?

After much review, I can give you two common threads and helpful tips to keep you safe from a cyber-attack:

Worms

Many of the recent infestations were viruses that contained "Worms". Internet worms, also known as email worms, send themselves out as an attachment to recipients in the users address books. Thus, you are more likely to receive an infected attachment from someone you know.

In the past, worms were simply an annoyance, but new breeds of virus have combined "worm" technology with destructive programming - such as the "Loveletter" virus which destroyed files, stole passwords *and* sent itself out to all of your friends.

With so many people using high-speed, always-on Internet services, "Worms" can circle the globe in a matter of hours.

Didn't Expect It? Don't Open It!

When it comes to worm virus defense, there one simple, hard-fast rule:

"DO NOT OPEN UNEXPECTED EMAIL ATTACHMENTS - EVEN IF THEY ARE FROM SOMEONE YOU KNOW"

Remember, if you open a worm virus you not only infect yourself but will almost certainly send the virus out to your friends and associates. Don't assume it's safe and don't let people send you attachments without informing you of its content.

Outdated Virus Scanners

A simple rule of thumb for virus scanners:

"A virus scanner is only as effective as it's last update."

There are over 56,000 viruses in existence today. Over 100 new viruses are released every month. Your virus scanner cannot protect you from these new creations unless it is updated regularly. Almost all virus protection programs allow you to quickly update your scanner over the internet with a press of a button. Learn how to do this and update your scanner at least once a month. Manually run your virus scanner after it has been updated - so any new viruses can be quickly caught before they do any damage.

I strongly recommend the newest version of McAfee Virus Scan. It is easy to purchase (\$29 at www.mcafee.com or local stores), installs easily and updates are a snap.

If you have any questions, or suspect that you have a virus problem, please call me immediately. Viruses are easier to catch than they are to cure!

John Bryant

"Your Computer Doctor"

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