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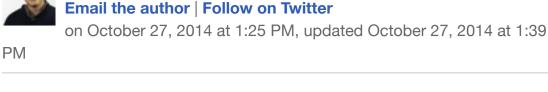
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On heels of city of Mobile hacked, here's some tips to prevent a cyber attack from infecting your life





from its effect.



By John Sharp | jsharp@al.com



MOBILE, Alabama - If there

is one thing certain about 2014, cyber attacks are on the rise and no one business or government sector is immune

Pin it

The latest victim is the city of Mobile, which reported Monday that hackers were to blame for a nearly week-long interruption of the city's email system.

Every department was affected, from police to public works and the mayor's office. Mobile joins a list of other victims to the hands of cyber criminals. Some high profile examples:

eBay revealed that hackers had managed to steal

personal records of 233 million users. The hack

took place between February and March, with usernames, passwords, phone numbers and physical addresses compromised.

AOL in April urged its tens of millions of email

- account holders to change their passwords and security questions after a cyber attack compromised about 2 percent of its accounts. Montana state government said it notified 1.3 million people including current and former residents, families of the dead and anyone else
- whose personal information may have been accessed in a 2013 cyber attack discovered earlier this year. Check out this interactive map by anti-virus software **firm Kaspersky**. The U.S. is the No. 4 infected country in the world, behind Russia, Germany and India.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security offers the

following tips to prevent your personal computer, or

The following preventative strategies are intended to help our public and private partners proactively look for emails attempting to deceive users into "clicking the link" or

• Never click on links in emails. If you do think the

retailer or primary retailer, go to the site and log on

referenced in the email, if valid, will be available via

directly. Whatever notification or service offering was

email is legitimate, whether from a third party

opening attachments to seemingly real websites:

your company's system, from being victimized by hackers.

regular log on. • Never open the attachments. Typically, retailers will not send emails with attachments. If there is any doubt, contact the retailer directly and ask whether the email with the attachment was sent from them.

Do not give out personal information over the

phone or in an email unless completely sure. Social

engineering is a process of deceiving individuals into

providing personal information to seemingly trusted

agents who turn out to be malicious actors. If

contacted over the phone by someone claiming to be a retailer or collection agency, do not give out your personal information. Ask them to provide you their name and a call-back number. Just because they may have some of your information does not mean they are legitimate! Other practical tips to protect yourself from cyberattacks: • Set secure passwords and don't share them with anyone. Avoid using common words, phrases, or personal information and update regularly. Keep your operating system, browser, anti-

• Verify the authenticity of requests from companies or individuals by contacting them

directly. If you are asked to provide personal

from major companies.

users.

sender appears to be.

Check out this story for other tips:

virus and other critical software up to date.

Security updates and patches are available for free

information via email, you can independently contact the company directly to verify this request. • Pay close attention to website URLs. Pay attention to the URLs of websites you visit. Malicious

websites sometimes use a variation in common

spelling or a different domain (for example, .com

instead of .net) to deceive unsuspecting computer

• For e-Mail, turn off the option to automatically download attachments. • Be suspicious of unknown links or requests sent through email or text message. Do not click on unknown links or answer strange questions sent to your mobile device, regardless of who the

• Make sure you've got a superstrong, unique

password. Make sure your password is difficult to

guess. One way to come up with a creative password

installing apps. This is one of the most prominent

apps ask for a lengthy list of permissions, and that

important to be aware of the types of information

your apps are accessing, which can include your

doesn't mean they're all ill-intentioned. But it's

is to brainstorm a random sentence. Take the first

letter of each word in that sentence and use that

acronym as the base for your password.

• Carefully read the permissions before

ways in which malicious apps can gain access to your personal information. These types of issues have been especially present in the Google Play store. A lot of

contacts, location, and even your phone's camera. • Don't send personal data via email. Sending critical information such as credit card numbers or bank account numbers puts it at risk of being intercepted by hackers or cyber attacks. • Keep an eye out for phishing scams. A phishing scam is an email or website that's designed to steal

from you. Often times, a hacker will use this email or

website to install malicious software onto your

convince their victims to hand over personal

poor grammar.

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computer. These web entities are designed to look

information. Phishing scams are typically easy to

like a normal email or website, which is how hackers

spot, but you should know what to look out for. Many

of these emails contain spell errors and are written in

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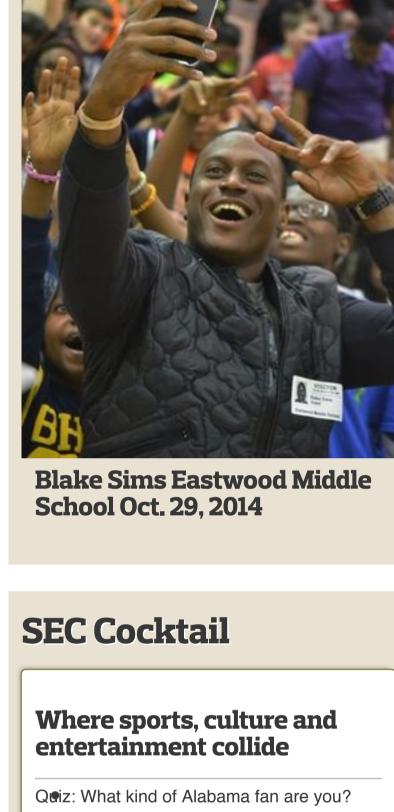
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