CYBERCRIME NEWS

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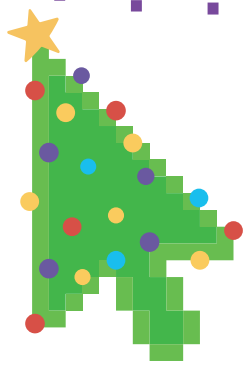
BE CYBER-SAFE AT CHRISTMAS



With December approaching, there is no escaping talk of Christmas and – with this being the last issue of 2023 – we're afraid this newsletter is no exception. Many businesses start to wind down for the festive period, keeping only essential functions running, whilst some close their doors entirely, until after the big day has passed.

As businesses begin to wind down, and the holiday spirit kicks in, this can lead to a complacency that cyber criminals are all too adept at exploiting. In Dorset alone, businesses lost a total of £757k to fraud and cybercrime in December 2022/January 2023.

Common tactics used by cyber criminals to trick people in to handing over credentials, or authorising payments to fraudulent bank accounts but the single biggest form of cybercrime is email compromise, which is generally the first step of a more serious cyber-attack.

- Perhaps you receive an email that suggests you need to make urgent changes to your account. Maybe it hints at an urgency that means it cannot wait until the new year.
- You receive an email that states a payment absolutely must be made before the close of business.
- Christmas is a blessing for cyber criminals in more ways than one, as reduced staffing levels can make their exploits easier, more effective, and harder to detect.
- If a mandate fraud payment is authorised in the last few hours before a Christmas break, it could plausibly be a week or two before anyone picks up on the mistake. By that time, the money will have been moved on, and will be irretrievable.
- A Christmas break can also afford cyber criminals a great deal of time to look around an organisations network, steal data or deploy malware, all with a greatly reduced chance of being detected.

Remain vigilant in the build up to Christmas. It's a great opportunity to remind yourself, and your staff, of the steps they can take to help your organisation remain secure.

ONLINE HELP

One of the best resources to help small to medium businesses stay cyber secure is the National Cyber Security Centres Small Business Guide, sharing simple steps you can take to protect your business against malware, and help your staff spot the signs of a phishing email.

NCSC have useful advice for a range of subjects... including:

- how to buy and sell second hand tech products safely,
- how to stay safe whilst shopping online,
- and how to secure internet connected devices Father Christmas might deliver are as secure as possible.

DORSET POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER DAVID SIDWICK

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CYBERCRIME NEWS

CYBER CRIME FACTS FOR DORSET

DECEMBER 2022 SAW A DECREASE IN REPORTING COMPARED TO THE PRECEDING MONTHS.

However, January saw a 35% increase in reports nationally compared to December, suggesting that criminals may have attacked during the Christmas break, and were detected once businesses returned to normal in the new year.

In Dorset, there was a 35% increase in reports of hacking, extortion and malware between December and January.

Survey carried out by Talion found that 60% of cyber security engineers working in businesses noticed an uptick in the number of attempted cyber attacks.

REPORTING CYBER CRIME

If you fall victim to fraud or cyber crime, you can report this to Action Fraud by visiting www.actionfraud.police.uk or by calling 0300 123 2040.

If you have received an email that you're not sure about, you can report this to the **National Cyber Security Centres Suspicious Email Reporting Service (SERS)**. Simply forward the email to **report@phishing.gov.uk**.

The SERS automatically analyses suspicious emails and, if it considers it to be malicious, can take steps to have email accounts and associated websites closed down, meaning each report can really make a difference.

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