

Security Panel Presentation 1/28/03

Hacking Threat

By: Dick Franzen

772-4539

rfranzen@dc.rr.com

In the computer world, HACKING can be defined as the intentional invasion of another party's computer associated resources for the purpose of exploitation. Such exploitation can be relatively sanguine and result in no adverse effects and may not even be noticeable that such an event took place. On the other hand, such exploitation could result in:

- a. denial of service of these resources to their rightful owner and/or authorized users;
- b. theft of data to the detriment of the data's owner; or
- c. manipulation of data so as to make it either unusable or unreliable and cause action to have the data replaced.

Hackers take advantage of computer users by exploiting the great capabilities and sometimes the known weaknesses in communications SW (browsers), computer operating systems (Windows) or in application SW (Outlook Express). We all use these tools because they are what make the computer a useful tool.

The main issue is that a Hacker knows more about YOUR computer than you do.

A key element in protection of your system is to maintain control over your system. Know what programs you are running and know how to configure them securely. (For single computer users this could be as simple as turning off file sharing.)

Check for SW updates regularly (weekly) from the vendor (Microsoft, etc.) and implement updates and/or patches as soon as they are available.

Other critical items to consider (in addition to what may have already been identified by other panelists) are the necessity of having Firewalls to protect you from both incoming attacks as well as outgoing messages that might be sent from your computer by a Hacker planted program, without your knowledge but, under your name and to all your address book contacts.

Firewalls come in SW and HW varieties:

SW: including that in Windows XP; Norton; McAfee; and ZoneAlarm

HW: such as a NETGEAR or LinkSys Routers

Select one that provides both incoming and outgoing protection.

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