PC RANSOMEWARE

What is it? - Do I need to worry about it? - What do I need to do?

What is it?

Ransomware has been in the news a lot lately. Most recently as of 6/27/2017. This is a type of Virus, actually known as MALWARE, that tries to take over your PC or MAC, lock it up and demand money to allow you to unlock it. The latest version will have you restart your machine at which point you are "hosed." It is not clear if this one will ask for money and allow you to unlock it, or ask for money but hose your machine anyway, or just hose it.

Do I need to worry about it?

YES! Anyone that uses a computer and is on the internet needs to worry. Read on.

What do I need to do?

There are several steps you need to take and rules to follow…

- ALWAYS MAKE SURE YOUR SYSTEM STAYS UP TO DATE WITH ALL SECURITY AND SYSTEM UPDATES. Set your system to do them automatically. See your local GURU if you don't know how.

- RUN A GOOD ANTI-VIRUS PROGRAM AND KEEP IT UP TO DATE. Set it for automatic updates

- CONSIDER A "CYBER WARE " BLOCKING PROGRAM. A good free one is Cybereason RansomeFree from - [Link to] ransomfree.cybereason.com/

- When surfing the internet, do not click on links you do not know (hard one I know)

- In email received, if you are nor absolutely sure of the sender, do not click on any links provided. Even if you know the sender, if you "mouse over" the link but do not click, the actual link may show on the status line at the bottom if you have one

If you follow good computer practices, you should be safe. Some more do's (or don'ts)…

- Use good strong passwords on your computer and any websites, especially financial, you visit and have login privileges. Do not use dates, addresses, phone numbers, names etc.

- If you have a router (most of us do), make sure it uses good security (WPA2-AES - do not use WEP) and turn off "WPS" (Wi-Fi protected services). It is dangerous. Also make sure you change the router login and password to something you want and also the WI-FI access "passcode" to your own version. The defaults are usually on the router label. If you do not have a router, get one.

- **Some internet providers, like Comcast, provide you with a two port or channel router. This allows use of one port for you and the other port for something else, like guest mode. Comcast and others advertise they have many hot-spots. They set up that second port for anyone with Comcast access to get on the internet through your router. This makes it easier for the neighborhood hacker to try to get on your network (you have a network even if it is only one computer or tablet etc.). It is suggested that you tell them you do not want it. Have them disable it and reclaim it for your personal use. Change the router passcode for it to your own.**

It is sad that this is happening. There are so many that do not follow just a few simple rules. Funny thing is, many companies, government agencies and others that are guilty of poor practices. For older people that have joined the PC community, it can be harder to learn what to do thus try to keep things simple with easy passwords. I always try to convince them to not be afraid of it, and practice the few simple rules.

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