SaskTel News

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Ransomware On The Rise

Ransomware is becoming more and more common these days, hitting banks, hospitals, corporations and individual users alike. The recent outbreak of the “WannaCry” ransomware has reminded computer users around the world how easily these attacks can inflict pain on the business world and disrupt critical services.

Ransomware holds your files hostage by making them inaccessible through encryption. Like most malware, your computer can become infected by opening a malicious attachment, a phishing email, or simply by visiting a compromised website. The ransomware then demands payment in exchange for the decryption key.

Ransom demands are usually made in bitcoin which offers a secure, largely untraceable, method of making and receiving payments. If payment is not received by the deadline, victims are often faced with a bigger shakedown or the loss of precious files.

The thought of losing valuable personal and financial files can certainly be unsettling. So, how can you protect yourself from the threat of these cyber attacks?

As always, a good defense is to prevent the infection in the first place. SaskTel encourages all online users to subscribe to an anti-virus program and to keep the software up-to-date. However, good anti-virus protection is just part of the solution to preventing an attack. When browsing online on your computer or smartphone, please keep the following in mind:

- Never open emails from unknown senders.
- Avoid suspicious websites and install a trust service in your browser, which substantially reduces the likelihood of going to a corrupted website.
- Make sure your operating system and applications are kept up-to-date.
- Consider adding a firewall to block incoming traffic.
- Don’t open or download any attachments, apps or other software you do not fully trust.
- Practice caution when clicking on advertisements or links in websites.

Most experts recommend you back-up your important personal and financial files regularly to a quality cloud based back-up service. If you’re concerned about backing up files online, you can utlize an external drive but bear in mind that ransomware can lock it up too if it’s connected to your computer at the time of an attack.

Without doubt, there is no easy way to deal with ransomware once it has infected your computer or device. If an infection has been detected, disconnect from Wi-Fi or the network immediately and notify your employer if a work device is involved. While it may be difficult to isolate “patient zero” in an attack, you can play an important role in containing the malware’s spread to other users.

Whether you pay the ransom or not, a full and complete rebuild of your computer should be performed to prevent the malware from taking control of your computer again.

Ransomware is one of the biggest cybersecurity threats today with thousands of new and increasingly sophisticated malware variants entering cyberspace every day. Even if you are vigilant about protecting your files and follow the above recommendations, ransomware and other such scams are difficult to stop and will continue to be a reality for all internet users. Make every effort to exercise caution in your digital practices so you don’t fall victim to this rising extortion tactic.

Lost or Stolen Devices

SaskTel launched its Lost and Stolen Mobile Device Service on September 30, 2013. The purpose of the service is to reduce the number of thefts of these devices by making it difficult to reconnect a lost or stolen device to our wireless network.

SaskTel, along with all Canadian wireless carriers and participating U.S. carriers, will interconnect with the GSMA database to black-list reported devices.

The CWTA website, www.devicecheck.ca, will allow anyone to check the International Mobile Equipment Identifier (IMEI), a unique registered number imbedded in the device, to see if the device has been black-listed in Canada. If the IMEI number has been black-listed, that device will not be able to be used on any Canadian network. If you plan on buying a used device, it is recommended that you check www.devicecheck.ca to ensure that it is not black-listed.

SaskTel has deployed an Equipment Identity Register (EIR) on its network to keep its own internal list of black-listed IMEIs. The EIR will connect to the GSMA global database to share the latest list of black-list devices with other carriers. The GSMA database takes black-list data from carriers that subscribe to the GSMA and compiles it into one black-list registry.

The SaskTel EIR downloads black-list data from Canadian and US carriers; therefore, any device reported lost or stolen by those carriers, up to the previous day, would also be capable of being blocked on the SaskTel network.

Customers may call 1-800-727-5835, visit a SaskTel Store, or visit a SaskTel Authorized Dealer to inquire as to whether or not a SaskTel mobile device has been black-listed, add a device to the black-list should it be lost or remove a device from the black-list should it be found.

More information can be found at: www.sasktel.com/support

Inside Wire

SaskTel would like to remind our customers that we provide basic telephone service to a single point in a premise and that the premise owners are responsible for the cost and maintenance of their inside wiring.

Customers must ensure all telephone wiring and jacks are Canadian Standards Association (CSA) approved and placement of all wire conforms to the Canadian Electrical Code.

On construction of all new single dwelling buildings, customers are responsible for providing an access hole from the inside of their premise to the area near the power meter, the ground wire from the main building grounding system to the main telephone service connection box, and a wooden backboard for the mounting of the telephone service connection box, if required.

For more information, please call SaskTel at 1-800-727-5835.

Toll-Free Numbers

SaskTel would like to remind you that only numbers with the prefix 800, 844, 855, 866, 877, and 888 are toll-free. These prefixes, which are not interchangeable, are used by simply dialing 1, followed by the appropriate prefix, followed by the seven-digit number.

Please note that all other prefixes, including 809 and 876, are not toll-free prefixes and long distance charges will apply on your telephone bill.

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