



COT Security Alert – Seasonal Scam Awareness

Phishing scams and malware campaigns that take advantage of the winter holidays and shopping season are expected to increase in the upcoming weeks. Users are urged to remain cautious concerning unsolicited email messages or browsing online, whether they are on a home or work computer.

Popular forms of phishing scams and malware campaigns during this season include:

- Infected electronic greeting cards.
- Phishing scams from illegitimate sources claiming to be charities.
- Infected screensavers or other free media with holiday or seasonal themes.
- Phishing scams appearing to be credit card applications.
- Fraudulent online shopping advertisements.
- Surveys that include asking for personal information.
- Online contests which offer prizes. These may be engineered to appeal to a certain demographic, such as children, who may more easily divulge personal information.

Adopting cautious behavior such as the following better equips users against malicious activity.

- Never follow unsolicited web links in email messages.
- Never open attachments in unexpected emails, even if you know the sender.
- Make sure antivirus software is current on updates.
- Make sure operating system software is current on security updates.
- Review the Federal Trade Commission Charity Checklist at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/alerts/alt114.shtm>.
- Check charities using the Better Business Bureau National Charity Report Index at <http://www.bbb.org/charity-reviews/national/>.
- Educate yourself and your family on how to recognize and avoid scams. <http://www.onguardonline.gov/default.aspx>
<http://www.staysafeonline.org/>

NOTICE: COT is providing this information so that you are aware of the latest security threats, vulnerabilities, software patches, etc. You should consult with your network administrator or other technical resources to ensure that the appropriate actions for

these alerts are followed. If you are a network administrator and need additional information, please call the Help Desk at 502.564.7576.

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