COT Security Alert – Extortion Email Warning

COT Office of the CISO has become aware of hoax extortion emails arriving in state email inboxes. The emails claim the sender has evidence the recipient has engaged in adult-themed online activity. The email may contain a username and password associated with the recipient making the claims seem more valid. It is believed the user name and password information was compromised in recent data breaches of social media sites. In the text of the email, the attacker claims to have infected the recipient's computer with malware which allowed the attacker to monitor keystrokes and record webcam footage of the recipient watching pornography. The attacker threatens to send the alleged webcam footage to all of the recipient's social media and email contacts unless they receive a payment. The scammer demands payment by Bitcoin or other digital currency in a very short timeframe.

Take these actions to reduce chances of compromising state email accounts or falling victim to an extortion email:
1. Never use your work email for personal activities, including LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.
2. Never respond to an unexpected email with your logon credentials, either by reply or by clicking a link in the email.
3. Be aware of dangers in posting personal information online.

If you receive an extortion email:
1. Do not reply to the email in any way.
2. Report the email to the Commonwealth Service Desk. Most claims of infection in these emails are false, but measures may be taken to ensure state devices are not infected. To report the email, right click and copy it over from your inbox list to a blank email rather than forwarding.

Thank you for your diligence and cooperation.

Notice: COT is providing this information so that you are aware of current security threats, vulnerabilities or preventive actions that may affect state government resources. If you suspect you have become victim to a security threat, please contact CommonwealthServiceDesk@ky.gov.

Office of the CISO
Commonwealth Office of Technology
Frankfort, KY 40601
http://technology.ky.gov/CISO/