Suggestions for navigating spam and scams

Phishing

Social engineering attack carried out via electronic communications that can often lead to ransomware or other methods of obtaining sensitive information.

Ransomware

Malicious software installed on your system that encrypts the hard drive or files and demands a ransom payment before the device is decrypted (compromising your data).

Faxploit

Fax-based malware delivery due to technology vulnerability.

Watch out for:

Unsolicited communication

Urgency, pressure or "too-good-to-be-true" offers

Requests for unusual payment methods (i.e., Bitcoin, gift cards, etc.)

Poor grammar/ spelling and unprofessional communication

Requests for personal information

As an individual:

- Validate message legitimacy before clicking on links or downloading attachments—check the email address or phone number of the person contacting you. If you don't recognize it and/or notice typos, mark it as spam.
- Don't give out personal information (credit card number, SIN, online account details etc.) over the phone or email, unless you reached out to a verified source.
- NEVER give an unsolicited caller remote access to your computer, even if the caller claims to represent a well-known company or product.

As an office:

- Implement policies and procedures for handling and reporting incidents, and provide privacy and security training for staff.
- Foster a culture that encourages employees to report issues or incidents as they occur.
- Protect work computers with regularly updated anti-virus and anti-spyware software and a good firewall.
- Establish password management policies requiring employees not to reuse passwords across accounts so that one compromised account does not affect other accounts.
- Use multi-factor authentication that relies on email, mobile app prompts or other authentication tokens, whenever possible.

Sources: Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta, Alberta Medical Association, Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission and Canadian Centre for Cyber Security

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