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Special edition on Cyber Hygiene and Security

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Understanding Cyber Hygiene and Security

In our increasingly connected world, the importance of cyber security cannot be overstated.

What Is Cyber Hygiene?

Cyber hygiene involves adopting good online habits to ensure the security of internet-connected systems. It encompasses practices that safeguard hardware, software, and data from cyber threats.

What is Cyber Security?

Cyber security is the overarching framework for protecting internet-connected systems. It includes both cyber security and physical security measures to prevent unauthorized access to data centers and other computerized systems. Information security, a subset of cyber security, aims to maintain the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data.

Importance of Cyber Security

To emphasize the significance of cyber security, we reflect on the words of Professor Gene Spafford: "The only system which is truly secure is one which is switched off and unplugged, locked in a titanium safe,

buried in a concrete bunker, and is surrounded by nerve gas and very highly paid armed guards. Even then, I wouldn't stake my life on it."

While absolute security may be elusive, our goal is to build comfort levels. Security is an investment, and the lack of it can cost much more. Our comfort level is a manifestation of our efforts and a realization of their effectiveness and limitations.

Why Am I At Risk?

Personal Data: Your personal data is one of the most valuable commodities you own.

Data Collection: Routine data collection for various purposes, both good and bad.

Marketing Practices: Marketing companies aggregate and sell collected data as a business practice.

Commoditization: Processing power and computers are commoditized.

Remote Control: Computers can be 'rooted' and controlled remotely for malicious purposes.

Why Isn't the Government Protecting Me?

While governments play a role in cyber security, the responsibility for personal cyber hygiene ultimately rests with individuals and organizations. It's crucial to take proactive measures to protect ourselves.

What Can I Do to Protect Myself?

Step 1: Use Reputable Antivirus Software

- Monitors your computer's memory and files for malicious software.
- Windows Defender is built into Windows; MacOS/Linux users have free options.
- Cellular carriers offer free antivirus for mobile devices.
- Commercial options available – research before choosing.

Step 2: Use Network Firewalls

- Front-line protection against unauthorized access.
- Controls and directs the flow of information.
- Built into modern operating systems and home networking equipment.

Step 3: Update Your Software Regularly

- Automatic update features are built into modern operating systems.
- Update both the operating system and third-party software regularly.

Step 4: Use Strong Passwords

- Choose passwords with at least 12 characters, including uppercase, lowercase, numbers, and symbols.

- Avoid common passwords like "123456" or "password."

Step 5: Use Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)

- Adds an additional layer of protection.
- Requires something you 'have' and something you 'know.'
- Use MFA, especially for critical services like banking.

Step 6: Use Device Encryption

- Protects data from being read on another device.
- Built into Windows (BitLocker) and MacOS (FileVault 2).
- iOS devices are natively encrypted; Android devices need intentional activation.

Step 7: Enable Device Location Features

- Allows possible recovery if the device is lost or stolen.
- Register devices with local police and insurance company.
- Take photos of devices with serial numbers for proof of ownership.

Step 8: Back Up Your Files Regularly

- Protects against data loss if your device is compromised.
- Store backups externally, on external drives or in the cloud.
- Built-in backup features in modern operating systems; commercial options available.

Step 9: Keep Your Computer/Device 'Clean'

- Avoid unnecessary software like games, screensavers, and social media add-ons.
- Dispose of old devices properly; perform factory restore or use erasing utility.
- Physically destroy non-functional devices.

Step 10: Secure your Internet Router/Gateway

- Critical to protecting your home network.
- Configure personally owned equipment properly.
- Use strong passwords and keep firmware updated.

Step 11: Use Secure Networks when Traveling

- Protect yourself on public networks; prefer cellular networks.
- If using public Wi-Fi, use a VPN to encrypt traffic.
- Stay informed about security issues; attend seminars for ongoing learning.

Step 12: Stay Informed

- Knowledge is power; pay attention to news reports.
- Be aware of your financial accounts; report suspicious activity.
- Attend seminars and educational sessions regularly.

Security Risks of USB Drives & Tips

- Misplacing USB sticks poses a risk.
- Malicious USB drives can compromise your system.
- Data breaches and losses can occur.

Tips to Keep Your Systems Safe:

- Do not insert unknown flash drives into sensitive computer systems.
- Use different flash drives for home and business PCs.
- Enable security measures like fingerprint recognition for USB drives.
- Keep computer software up to date; disable Auto Run.
- Create and enforce policies about USB drives.

By following these guidelines, we contribute to a safer and more secure digital environment for ourselves and our organization.

Stay secure and vigilant!

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