



June 2017

## NCDPI Cybersecurity Newsletter

Welcome to the first North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) Cybersecurity newsletter. My name is KC Hunt and I am the DPI Information Security Officer. A little about me; I have 25 years of cyber security experience with the federal government and have just moved to the state arena. This forum is for me to inform you a little about cybersecurity and how it impacts your life. Please email me any suggestions of what you would like me to cover and I will provide you with information which should make your computing experience more secure.

### Cybercrooks targeting cell phones

Everyone has a smart phone today. Apple, Android, Windows.... With the amount of information on our phones today, protecting them is something that should be on everyone's mind. Reports among the cyber threat community show that there has been an 83 percent increase of smartphone infections in the second half of 2016.

Strategies to take to protect your phone and the information that is stored on it.



- Keep your phone updated with the latest updates from the vendor.
- Do not jail break\* your phone – this is usually done so that you can install some software that is not available in the official store. The official store is very good at analyzing the apps for issues or malware.
- Only install apps which are available from the official store for the added scrutiny that the store tests the app.
- Look at the permissions which the app is requesting. A flashlight app should not need access to your location and contact list.
- Always have auto-lock implemented on the phone and set a password and change at least every 6 months.

## Dark web vendor selling millions of Gmail and Yahoo accounts

OK, so I know what you are thinking. So, what, I don't have any secrets. Well you do and let me explain. I have a personal email account. I have a complex password on that account so that when I send someone an email, the recipient has a fair amount of confidence that it did in fact come from me.

The problem with this scenario is, I am human and I have over 100 accounts everywhere. I have complex passwords on most of them. I cannot remember 100 different account passwords so that means that the same password that I used for my personal account, which is being sold right now, is the same password that I use for my bank account. Now, I'm getting excited! Some ideas that I have heard of and used are:

- Purchase a password vault from a reputable software company (LastPass and 1Password) are just two recommended.
- Apple users can use keychain which is free with the OS. It is kind of awkward but has reputable security.
- **At home only**; I use a journal book which I write down my user name and then the password in pencil with a date beside it. I also write down all my answers to this site's security questions. I use the written date to ensure that I change the password in 3 months. Remember it is written in pencil, erase and update.

## Passwords are your best friend

Oh no! not another lecture on passwords. I get that look every time that I mention passwords. Well let me mention them again and give you some ideas. After all this could not be a security newsletter without passwords.

There are many schools of thought on how to pick a secure password and here are some tips:

- Make the password at least 15 characters long. What, you say! I can't remember my 3-character password now. The reason for this is that Windows computers have an option that can save your hashed password into two 7 character 'chunks'. If you create a 14-character password, then it can be stored as two 7 character passwords and easily cracked. So, with that said here are some tips on complex 15 or more character passwords
- Use a passphrase i.e "I love salty popcorn"
- Now to make it more complex add an exclamation mark, so we have "I love salty popcorn!"
- Now capitalize the words that you identify with; for me it would be "I Love Salty popcorn!"
- Last step substitute some numbers for some of the letters. Use numbers that make sense to you. For me it would be "1 Love Salty p0pcorn!"
- Now spaces are not allowed so we would use – or \_ for the spaces. Final password would be I\_Love\_Salty\_p0pcorn!"
- Another option would be to repeat words. Let's say that you only have an 8-character password "1UglyGuy"

- Type the password and repeat until you get to at least 15 characters “1UglyGuy1UglyGuy”. This will enforce the whole password to be saved as 1 hash instead of saving as chunks of 7 characters.
- Don’t forget to add a special character “1UglyGuy#1UglyGuy#”

### **Millions of identities stolen from education platform Edmodo**

A recent report about the educational platform Edmodo has been released. If this is a tool which your educators are using, they need to change the passwords on any accounts which use the same password as the one on this site. The link to the report is below.

[https://motherboard.vice.com/en\\_us/article/hacker-steals-millions-of-user-account-details-from-education-platform-edmodo](https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/hacker-steals-millions-of-user-account-details-from-education-platform-edmodo)

Please feel free to suggest topics that you would like me to address in upcoming newsletters to [kc.hunt@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:kc.hunt@dpi.nc.gov) or (919) 807 4068. I am always willing to share cyber security information.

\*Jailbreak – use software and procedures to disable the phone’s certificate checking so that a app that is not from the approved commercial store can be installed.



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