

Computer Viruses and Malicious Code

These days with the proliferation of computers and computer technology it is inevitable that when things go wrong they do so on a larger scale. People can sit at home and write programs that insidiously invade computer systems both public and private. The consequences of these attacks can range from benign to extremely severe and the consequences can be extreme depending upon the system attacked

The computer simply executes instructions given to it. As such it is an extremely useful tool for the criminally inclined. When passwords and security mechanisms that are put in place to protect a system are breached, access is gained and a host system can be altered, its contents modified or infected with a latent virus or malicious code that will execute at a later date. This means that a system can be compromised, and although seeming to run smoothly will cause havoc when least suspected.

A computer virus is a program for the computer that is destructive, or designed to gather un-authorized information, or somehow impair the computers integrity. Viruses are malicious in nature and intent. . A Computer virus is a piece of code that can duplicate itself and spread via Floppy Disks, Networks and of course the Internet to many computers. Some can format your hard drive, erase your computers BIOS and cause programs to crash. A virus can copy itself or reproduce itself and infect another computer system without permission or knowledge of the user. A virus can only spread from one computer to another when its host is taken to the uninfected computer, for instance by a user sending it over a network or carrying it on a removable medium such as a floppy disk, CD, or USB drive or via an attachment in Email.

So what is the best advice to avoid viruses?

1. Don't open an email from an unknown sender
2. Don't click on hotlinks on websites unless it is from a trusted site
3. Don't open email attachments
4. Don't inset software into your computer without first scanning for viruses and malware
5. Don't allow Active X controls to be installed on your system
6. Use caution when visiting questionable sites
7. Avoid clicking on a box just because it is blinking or flashing

If you know you have a virus or malware, the only sure way to be sure it is gone is to reformat your computer.

You should also make use of precautionary software like "Ad-Aware", "Spybot Search and Destroy".

Make sure you have a good anti-virus program installed on your system and update it regularly. Some recommendations include:

Xoftspyse
AVG Antivirus (they have a free version),
NOD 32 Antivirus
Bit Defender

Remember computer health and integrity is everyone's responsibility. Keep you computer free from viruses, spyware and other malicious software. These helps maintain the integrity and privacy of all systems.