

Computer Bits by Mark Eggert of Raad One Network Solutions, Inc.

Welcome to Computer Bits, a series of articles on computers and network information. For this month's article I found an interesting column in the December 26, 2006 issue of PC Magazine talking about the shift in hacking activities.

I'd like to start by asking have you noticed two things this year. First, have you noticed that very low number of mass virus attacks this year? And second, have you noticed that you're getting a far greater amount of spam this year? Actually these two things are related. Hackers are shifting their activities from stealing bandwidth or shutting down websites to online burglary. They're looking to steal information and money from you. How are they doing this? They're using spam to phish for information. They're hoping that you reply to their spam or visit their phony websites where they hope to trick you into giving them account information so that they can pose as you and steal your money.

Financial institutions are taking steps to help prevent this but there are a few additional ones you should consider:

1. You should harden your browser. Upgrade to either Internet Explorer 7 or Firefox 2.0, both have additional security. A word of caution here: if you use browser based applications, make sure they are compatible with these browsers. You should also make sure you have all of the updates for the browser you use.
2. Eliminate spam. Use an anti-spam filter and make sure it is up to date. Many email service providers offer anti-spam filters, use them. Also, many companies offer anti-spam add-ins for email applications.
3. Check you accounts for identity fraud. It is a good idea to check your bank and brokerage accounts often for any signs of fraud.

If you have a computer or network question you'd like answered and you think others would like to know the answer too, please forward them to me. My email address is meggert@wi.rr.com, my phone number is 262-679-7704 and my fax number is 262-679-7664.