

Spam

Spotting the Threat

The email threats faced by organizations today vary greatly in complexity, volume, and impact. Here we take a closer look so you can spot the threat before it harms you or your organization.

Spam is any email that arrives in your inbox uninvited. While most spam contains harmless promotional content, some spam emails contain malicious links or attachments developed by cybercriminals.

Clicking or downloading these can lead to identity theft, a ransomware attack or any number of other potentially devastating cyber threats.

Malicious spam can be spotted, however, by recognizing the clues found in most phishing emails.

These include:

- A sender address you don't recognize or doesn't make sense.
- An empty 'To' address field or one filled with names you don't know.
- A send date or time that falls outside normal business hours.
- A heightened sense of urgency or alarm.
- Promises of rewards or threats if you do or don't act.

The sample email highlights clues you can watch for.

Example

Distributed via the CDC Health Alert Network
(emailSendTime:'I, F j':America/Chicago)
CDCCHAN-00426

◀ Sender name and address are suspicious if you don't normally receive emails from this source.

Dear (email:firstName):

We would like to update you on the COVID-19 situation we informed you of earlier.

◀ Were you informed? If not, this is suspicious.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to closely monitor an outbreak of COVID-19 in your city and school district. CDC has established an Incident Management System to coordinate a domestic and international public health response.

◀ Link address looks random and unofficial. ▼

An updated list of new cases in your city is available at <http://dc.xu32ntw83hfaddapslenb1250.html>

You are immediately advised to go through the cases above to avoid potential hazards. Pay special attention to the contact-tracing data to see if you have been exposed. Failure to do so could result in infection and dangerous spread of the virus.

▲ A heightened sense of urgency and threats of negative consequences for not taking action are signs of phishing..

Sincerely,
CDC_INFO National Contact Center
National Center for Health
Division of eHealth Marketing
Center for Disease control and Prevention