CCS Technologies

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"Local Support • Personal Service • Since 1976"  www.ccstech.net  "Relax...we're on IT"

# If It Can Happen to Equifax, It Can Happen to Anyone!

**by Jeff Verry**

"It seems a day like any other, when little Hans Brinker sets off to visit his grandfather." So begins a favorite story from my childhood. Little Hans is walking by a dike protecting his native Holland and sees that it is beginning to leak. He plugs it up with his finger and stays there all night, in the dark and cold, until the village arrives. Hans Brinker saved Holland!

We may not live in lowlands overshadowed by the imminent threat of flooding, but as we use computers, phones, tablets or any other Internet connected device we should think like we are. We are under the constant and changing threat of a deluge of malicious attacks, from sophisticated crime syndicates, hostile foreign governments and other crooks.

Anyone who has read *CCS Technologies* newsletters on a regular basis knows the importance of anti-virus, anti-malware, firewalls, user training and of course, backups. A critical component of this comprehensive approach to security is keeping your system up to date. This is done by making sure you have the latest critical and important security updates and patches for your operating system and all-important programs.

There's a reason they are called patches, we've gotta plug the holes! A dam or dike with just one crack in it is not a dam or a dike. It's a flood. This can often be a little painful. It means your computer will need to be rebooted. There is a chance that applying a patch could make some things not work. Sometimes even the best medicine has some side effects. But it is always safer to stay up to date in the long run then to remain vulnerable. Patching is painful, but not patching can be exponentially more so. Just ask Equifax.

From the middle of May to July of this year, hackers carried out a successful attack and infiltration of the credit agency Equifax. This breach resulted in unauthorized access to the personal information of nearly 44% of the U.S. population. The (now former) CEO Richard Smith was brought up to Capitol Hill to answer a fundamental question: how could this happen? The answer is as sobering as it is simple: One employee didn't install one patch when they should have. That's it. That alone caused the 145-million person data leak at one of the world's top companies.

If an organization with the IT resources of Equifax struggles with this, what can an individual or a small business possibly do? We at *CCS Technologies* have a multi-level and flexible approach that can be tailored to fit your needs and size. We take "plugging the holes" very seriously and also realize the importance of doing this in a way that makes good business sense, reducing potential downtime and minimizing risk.

Buy one computer from *CCS Technologies* and you will see this philosophy in action. Every computer we sell is "Set up and Ready to Use." One of the key components of this is that the OS and all onboard applications are up to date as of the day it leaves our shop. This is included in the price of computer because quite frankly we wouldn't feel comfortable doing it any other way.

The same portfolio of patches and updates are applied as part of our Standard PC Cleanup. The last thing we do to any computer we repair is make sure it is up to date before it is returned to a client. Our technicians are continually staying up to date on the latest security trends and the minutia of staying safe in an increasingly dangerous world. For example, we have been removing QuickTime for Windows since it was abandoned by Apple last April as standard practice, advising customers on alternatives, if needed. Plug the hole!

The most effective way to stay up to date is using something called Patch Management. Our *CCS* ProVent remote management program watches over your computers and servers and reports hourly. A *CCS* technician personally reviews this and can advise what is up to date and schedule software updates in a timely manner, while also working around your business' schedule. ProVent even has an add on module for financial firms that require compliance reporting.

I have seen it find a social security number stored as plain text, in a PDF attachment, in the Deleted Items folder, in an email archive. ProVent Compliance flagged it for the client to take corrective action. We were able to tell the client exactly where the potential risk was and how to eliminate it.

In many ways, ProVent works a lot like little Hans Brinker. A tiny program walks around the perimeter of your network, day and night, looking for cracks and leaks. When it finds one, we plug the hole as quickly as possible and then advise you what further actions the rest of the village needs to take.

If you need help or have any questions on patch management, compliance reporting or just keeping one computer or server up to date, give *CCS Technologies* a call. And if anyone knows Paulino Barros Jr (the new CEO of Equifax) and can give him our number…

***"Relax...we're on IT"***

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