

Fraud of the Month - 5/08 - Smishing

The Latest Scams Circulating the Consumer World. Be warned. Be informed.

May 2008

Smishing

The Pitch

A text message arrives on your cell phone that reads something like this: "We're confirming you've signed up for our dating service. You will be charged \$2 per day unless you cancel your order at www.smishing.com."

The Scam

Most people will go to the website because they don't want to pay reoccurring premium rates on their cell phone bill. The website prompts them to download a program to "unsubscribe", but it is actually a Trojan horse that turns their computer into a zombie computer. Hackers can control a zombie computer and make it part of a bot network to launch denial of service attacks, install keylogging software or steal personal account information.

It is estimated that in 2008 Americans will receive 1.5 billion spam text messages. People who use eBay, online banking or brokerage services, and social networking sites like MySpace are the most susceptible to receiving a smishing e-mail. That doesn't leave too many of that smishing won't affect does it?

The word "Smishing" is derived from the familiar term "phishing". The "sm" comes from SMS, the protocol used to transmit text messages via cellular devices.

Phishing is an attempt to fraudulently acquire confidential information, such as passwords and credit card details, by masquerading as a trustworthy person or business in an apparently official electronic communication, such as an email or an instant message.

Play it Safe

- Always remember that your cell phone is just as susceptible to phishing as your computer. Critically analyze any text message solicitations you receive and don't go to a website to "unsubscribe".
- Call your cell phone carrier and ask them to unsubscribe you from the list that sent you the original text message. Please note that your cell phone carrier didn't send you the e-mail, but they can change something in the switch so that you don't get a text message from that particular soliciting company again.
- Avoid entering your cell phone number on websites to get free ring tones or other free offers.

Sources: <http://www.clarkhoward.com/> , McAfee, and Beyond Wireless - A Verizon Authorized Agent