

CYBER CRIME SENTINEL



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This newsletter has been collated by West Midlands Regional Cyber Crime Unit and is intended for wider distribution within the West Midlands Region among organisations and members of the public.

Hashing

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Cyber Word of the Week

Hashing passwords is the process of converting plain-text passwords into a fixed-length, irreversible set of characters using a hash function. This transformed value, known as the hash, acts as a secure representation of the password. Unlike encryption, hashing is a one-way process, making it impossible to reverse the process and obtain the original password.

When verifying a user, the password they have inputted is hashed and **compared** with the value stored. If it is a match, the user is granted access to the account.

Hashing passwords enhances security by protecting user credentials, ensuring that even if the hashed values are compromised, the actual passwords remain difficult to retrieve. Passwords should be stored as hash values and never in their plain-text form, especially in an organisation.

Read the NCSC's guidance on having a secure password [here](#).



Ditch The <Script>

The National Crime Agency (NCA) has launched their "Ditch The Script" campaign to educate and inspire children, parents, and teachers about careers in the tech industry and Computer Misuse related offences.

It is crucial that we guide and safeguard children, providing them with the necessary

tools to navigate the digital world responsibly. The campaign not only highlights the repercussions of Computer Misuse but also showcases the abundance of positive career opportunities available in the tech industry.

Look out for our posts on LinkedIn ([@RCCU WM](#)) and X ([@ROCUWMCyber](#))

Learn more about Cyber Choices [here](#).



What's On?

Would your organisation benefit from some free cyber training? We are currently running our interactive, table top exercise 'Criminal Minds'. Delivered by police professionals, we can help make your organisation more secure.

We tailor our delivery to your organisations needs, so if there's an area of cyber you'd like us to focus on, please get in touch.

Contact us via email on: wmcyber@westmidlands.police.uk or on LinkedIn @ **RCCU WM**

We are incredibly excited to confirm that we will be exhibiting at the Photography & Video Show 2024! The show will be held at the NEC, Birmingham from 16th-19th March. Come along and chat with us about how you can strengthen your cyber security and digital awareness.

We're exhibiting at



GET TICKETS NOW

photographyshow.com

Free entry for professional photographers,
filmmakers and content creators; subject to specific criteria.



Recent Cyber Headlines



Ransomware Groups Are Bouncing Back

Faster From Law Enforcement Busts

Six days before Christmas, the US Department of Justice loudly announced a win in the ongoing fight against the scourge of ransomware: An FBI-led, international operation had targeted the notorious hacking group known as BlackCat or AlphV, releasing decryption keys to foil its ransom attempts against hundreds of victims and seizing the dark web sites it had used to threaten and extort them. “In disrupting the BlackCat ransomware group, the Justice Department has once again hacked the hackers,” deputy attorney general Lisa Monaco declared in a statement.

Two months and one week later, however, those hackers don't appear particularly “disrupted.” For the last seven days and counting, BlackCat has held hostage the medical firm Change Healthcare, crippling its software in hospitals and pharmacies across the United States, leading to delays in drug prescriptions for an untold number of patients.

In another, more recent bust, the UK's National Crime Agency last week led a broad takedown effort against the notorious Lockbit ransomware group, hijacking its infrastructure, seizing many of its cryptocurrency wallets, taking down its dark web sites, and even obtaining information about its operators and partners. Yet less than a week later, Lockbit has already launched a fresh dark web site where it continues to extort its victims, showing countdown timers for each one that indicate the remaining days or hours before it dumps their stolen data online.

Read more [here](#).



Expert Warns of Growing Android Malware

Activity

Kaspersky has unveiled its annual analysis of the mobile threat landscape, revealing a striking 52% surge in attacks on mobile devices in 2023 compared to the previous year. Presented at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, the report underscores the escalating risks facing mobile users globally.

According to the report, the number of mobile attacks soared to nearly 33.8 million in 2023, marking a significant increase from the previous year's figures. Among the several threats detected, adware emerged as the most prevalent, constituting 40.8% of all identified threats. Notably, the UK experienced 258,929 mobile attacks during the same period.

While there was a decline in the number of banking Trojan installation packages, attacks using mobile bankers remained steady. In particular, Kaspersky uncovered over 1.3 million malicious installation packages, with 154,000 of these containing a mobile banking Trojan.

Read more [here](#).



Over Half of UK Firms Concerned About Insider

Threats

A majority (54%) of UK business decision makers are concerned about the likelihood of their employees being approached by cybercriminals, according to a new Cifas study.

The non-profit polled 500 individuals responsible for staff training programmes and budgets in companies of over 1000 employees that offer hybrid working.

The results of its survey revealed increasing anxiety about the likelihood of staff disclosing sensitive information or providing network access to fraudsters in exchange for cash.

Read more [here](#).

In Other News:

[Fortnite game](#)

developer Epic Games
allegedly hacked

Half of IT Leaders
Identify IoT as
Security Weak Point

Latest from the NCSC:

Products on your
perimeter considered
harmful (until proven
otherwise)



This Weeks Top Tip



Passwords: Three Random Words & Hashing

Using a secure password is crucial for protecting your accounts and sensitive information from unauthorised access. One popular and advised method for creating strong and memorable passwords is the "three random words" technique, which involves selecting three unrelated words and combining them to form a passphrase.

In relation to hashing, this works because rainbow tables (a table of common passwords and their hashed values) are not complex enough yet to store different combinations of words and their hashed values to be compared against when a hashed password list has been compromised. Therefore, your password remains safe and is unlikely to be matched against a password in a rainbow table.

Read more NCSC Guidance on phishing [here](#).



Engagement in the Community

This week, our protect team have been working on how they can enhance deliveries. They also attended the NHS Summit in Birmingham and GTG's

careers conference to link in with other businesses and offer cyber support.

Our Prevent team have been continuing working with young adults in interventions across the midlands, offering them support and educating them on responsible digital behaviour and the ethical use of technology. They've also been delivering inputs to larger audiences and attended a safeguarding conference to support parents and careers.

In other news, our Sentinel newsletter has been growing over the years and reaching larger audiences. This week we were contacted by Graham.

Graham from Cross-Sector safety and Security Communications Project Director said:

“You are currently the only UK Police Service unit that is producing and cascading such a useful, valuable and relevant cyber security bulletin.”

Graham, thank you for your kind comments.

Would your employees benefit from some free cyber training? Get in touch at wmcyber@westmidlands.police.uk or via [LinkedIn](#).



Improve your business's cyber security with free membership at the Cyber Resilience Centre for the West Midlands.

With membership at the WMCRC, you will receive regular tips and guidance on how

to firm up your business's cyber security.

Register to become a member (for free) today at www.wmcrc.co.uk/membership