

Internet group: Quality over speed in new domains

May 6 2012, By ANICK JESDANUN , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- The organization in charge of expanding the number of Internet address suffixes - the ".com" part of domain names - is apologizing for delays but says it's favoring "quality, not speed."

Three weeks ago, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers abruptly shut down a system for letting companies and organizations propose new suffixes, after it discovered a software glitch that exposed some private data. At the time, [ICANN](#) planned to reopen the system within four business days. The system remains suspended indefinitely.

"We've very focused on the quality of what we do," ICANN CEO Rod Beckstrom said. "We take this very seriously. That's why we're moving very methodologically and professionally."

In an interview with The Associated Press this week, Beckstrom added, "We apologize for the delay, but we're committed to getting this right."

ICANN has said it needed time to figure out why the software failed and how to fix it. That was completed last week, Beckstrom said, but ICANN still must undergo extensive testing on the fixes and inform companies and organizations whose data had been exposed. He declined to offer a timetable; ICANN said Friday that it planned to provide an update after Tuesday.

Up to 1,000 [domain name suffixes](#) could be added each year in the most

sweeping change to the domain name system since its creation in the 1980s.

The idea is to let Las Vegas hotels, casinos and other attractions congregate around ".Vegas," or a company such as Canon Inc. draw customers to "cameras.Canon" or "printers.Canon." The new system will also make Chinese, Japanese and Swahili versions of ".com" possible.

After several years of deliberations, ICANN began accepting applications in mid-January. The application window was to have closed on April 12 - the same day ICANN had to shut down the system, just hours before the deadline.

The glitch did not affect general availability of the Internet's [domain name system](#) - the databases that let Internet-connected computers know where to send email and locate websites. It also did not affect the ability to register new names under existing suffixes.

Rather, the glitch was with the software ICANN had set up to take applications for new suffixes.

The proposals were supposed to be confidential until the application period closed. The software glitch allowed some applicants to view data about others, including potential competitors. The data were limited to file names and usernames, not the contents of the files.

But those names in some cases offered clues about which companies were proposing what suffixes, Beckstrom said. Knowing that could allow an applicant to change a proposal and gain an advantage.

ICANN believes that 105 applicants might have had data viewed by others, while 50 applicants might have seen information on others - inadvertently, ICANN believes. That's out of 1,268 registered applicants,

each of which can submit as many as 50 suffix proposals.

Beckstrom said that once the system reopens, ICANN will monitor applicants to determine whether they make adjustments based on what they might have seen. Applicants will also have at least a week to make sure their data didn't get lost or corrupted.

The delay shouldn't have a major effect on the availability of new suffixes, as the new names won't appear in general use until at least next spring - in many cases, much later.

Late Friday, ICANN said it had received 2,091 suffix proposals - fully completed or in progress - and another 214 for which it was still awaiting or processing application fees. That means applications will be divided into at least four batches of about 500 each, potentially stretching the review process over a few years.

The bigger damage could be in the long-term confidence in ICANN. Even before the glitch was discovered, opponents of the domain-name expansion questioned ICANN's ability to roll out new suffixes smoothly.

Beckstrom said all organizations encounter technical problems, and he said ICANN hopes to retain people's confidence by resolving the problems and communicating well.

ICANN did not say what suffixes were proposed. It plans to release a list a few weeks after the application window closes, after which it will accept challenges for trademark and other issues.

ICANN said Friday that it had received \$350 million in applications fees so far. Each application costs \$185,000, and winners will have to pay \$25,000 a year. The money will pay for ICANN's costs setting up the system, reviewing applications and making sure parties do what they

have promised once the suffix is operational. Some of the money will be set aside for potential lawsuits from unsuccessful applicants and others. Companies can make money by selling names under approved suffixes.

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