

Serious cyber-attack threat compounded by lack of individuals' online security

June 4 2014, by Robert Beahan

The major computer virus that could give hackers access to sensitive information is a serious threat, as hundreds of thousands of people have little or no security software, according to the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET).

Hugh Boyes, the IET's cyber security lead said: "This is a very serious threat compounded by the fact that too many people have limited security protection on their computers.

"We would encourage Microsoft and Apple to maintain 'forever' security support for their old systems. Machines running these older systems could pose a serious weakness and providing on-going support will be lower-cost compared to fixing things afterwards."

"Unencrypted passwords should never be stored on computers in case they are accessed by Gameover Zeus or another aggressive malware program. If there is a need to store passwords, then use a good password manager application, which backs up and shares with your smartphone or tablet computer.

"One piece of valuable advice that is rarely given is that people should have two separate accounts on their PC – one standard account for normal day-to-day use and one administrator account which should only be used when changes need to be made to the machine, such as installing software or adding printers. The administrator account should not be used for web browsing or accessing emails. This action can prevent

approximately 90 per cent of current exploits and attacks."

Useful tips from the IET include:

- Install internet [security software](#) from companies listed on Get Safe
- Do not open emails unless you are 100 per cent certain that they are authentic, i.e. you know the sender and the email is from them
- Make sure your internet security software is up-to-date and switched on at all times
- Make sure your Windows operating system has the latest Microsoft updates applied. If running Microsoft XP, remember that this operating system is no longer being supported and all home and small business users should move onto an alternative operating immediately to reduce the risk of malware infection
- Make sure your software programs have the latest manufacturers' updates applied
- Make sure all of your files including documents, photos, music and bookmarks are backed up on a separate machine
- Never store passwords on your computer in case they are accessed by Gameover Zeus or another aggressive malware program.

Provided by Institution of Engineering and Technology

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