International contest asks hackers to write 'evil' code

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While most hackathons and programming contests encourage participants to develop usable software, a contest hosted by Binghamton University's Scott Craver asks users to develop code that is "subtly evil."

The eighth annual Underhanded C Contest, an international programming contest that encourages developers to write innocent-looking code implementing malicious behavior, runs through Nov. 15. The main goal of the contest is to write source code that is straightforward and easily passes visual inspection by other programmers, but implements some specific underhanded behavior that cannot be easily detected.

The purpose of the Underhanded C Contest it not to encourage deviant behavior, but rather to raise awareness about security issues and drive research, said Craver, associate professor of electrical and computer engineering at Binghamton University and creator of the "Craver Attack," a method for exploiting flaws in digital watermarks.

"We are encouraging people to expose ways an adversary may sneak something into a computer program, and we hope that this may ultimately be helpful to secure software development," writes Craver on the contest website.

Craver, a computer security expert, started the Underhanded C Contest in 2005 after being inspired by Daniel Horn's 2004 Obfuscated V contest, which was created to question the security of electronic voting

[machines](#).

The contest is unique this year because Craver is teaming up with the Nuclear Threat Initiative, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to reduce the threat of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. This year's challenge is based on a real issue with nuclear arms control monitoring and verification technologies.

The contest submission deadline is Nov. 15. Results of judging and the second phase of the contest will be announced Jan. 15, 2016. Winners will receive $1,000 in cash.

More information: For more information, visit www.underhanded-c.org

Provided by Binghamton University