

Love stinks

E-mail letter pledging amour infects global Internet systems



MIKE WENDLAND

In less than 24 hours, the "Love Bug" virus spread to millions of computers around the world, worse than any other virus yet experienced, including last year's infamous, Melissa virus.

While Melissa was relatively harmless, the so-called Love Bug destroys multimedia graphics and sound files before e-mailing itself as an attachment to every address in the user's e-mail directory. Security and IT professionals have been working around the clock to remove the virus from network mail servers. Scores of major corporations and govern-

ment systems around the world have had to shut down or become so clogged with the viruses that e-mail was all but unusable. Literally millions of copies of the virus poured into the electronic mailboxes of individual computer users. At one point Thursday, I was getting a new copy of the bug every minute.

As the weekend arrived, there were reports that the virus has morphed into a new version which is rapidly making its way around the Internet as a round two of the attack. This one has the subject line "FW: JOKE" and contains an attachment called "Very Funny.vbs." The name change masquerades the exact same virus, thus allowing the malicious program to worm its way into even more computers and avoid anti-virus software

that screens out viruses by name.

Microsoft's vulnerability

Like most of the destructive viruses we've seen recently, the Love Bug was written in Microsoft's Visual Basic scripting language and exploits security weaknesses in Microsoft's Internet Explorer Web browser and its popular Outlook and Outlook Express e-mail programs.

Already, a growing number of Microsoft critics are urging people to turn away from the popular programs in favor of alternate browsers like Netscape (www.netscape.com) or Opera (www.opera.com) and third-party e-mail programs like Eudora (www.eudora.com), which seem to be much less susceptible to viruses.

For those who want to disable

the Microsoft Visual Basic scripting function that this particular virus exploits, here's how to turn this option off. Go to the Control Panel, then:

- click on Add/Remove Programs
- click the Windows Setup tab
- click on Accessories to get the details
- uncheck Windows Scripting Host
- click "ok" to save any changes

This will have minimal effect on most Windows functions and will keep you free from this virus. But it's not a cure all and the problem is much bigger than Microsoft. The deranged people who spread viruses can just as easily write viruses for other operating systems and programs.

Protect yourself

That said, just because you get the virus, doesn't mean that you're infected. The only way that will happen is if you open the attached Love Letter file that comes with the e-mail.

Meantime, there are three simple steps everyone can take to protect against all kinds of computer viruses.

- Back up all your important files. Use something like Iomega's popular Zip disks or other large capacity storage media, or even floppies if that's all you have. Just do so. Now. Before you're infected with whatever is next unleashed. Then, get into the habit of backing up weekly.

■ Never, ever, under any circumstances, open attached files or pictures or graphics that you receive unsolicited by e-mail, even if you know the person sup-

posedly sending the file. This is now the way viruses are spread and though most of the 1,000 new viruses being unleashed every month are not as nasty as the Love Bug, it's simply too risky to take the chance.

■ Make sure your anti-virus software is updated. All of the big anti-virus firms now have Love Bug

Until next week.... 73 everybody.
Mike Wendland covers the Internet for NBC-TV NewsChannel stations across the country. He is the author of a series of Internet books. You can reach him through his Web site at <http://www.pcmike.com> and hear him Monday through Friday at 6:26 p.m. on NewsRadio 960, WWJ, and on Saturdays and Sundays from 4-6 p.m. on TalkRadio 1270, WXYT.

BUSINESS MARKETPLACE

First-rate company

Agents rated Amerisure Insurance of Farmington Hills first among 22 writers of workers compensation insurance, according to the property casualty ratings in Criterium Publishing's April 3 newsletter, Insurance Markets.

The annual survey was distributed to more than 5,000 agents and brokers at the end of 1999. Amerisure scored the best in the categories of accessibility and timely response to inquiries, flexibility on conditions and exclusions, and efficient and fair payment of claims.

"We are especially pleased with this rating," said Richard F. Russell, president and CEO of Amerisure Inc. "It proves that our strategy to only focus on commercial lines is satisfying our business partners. I can't emphasize enough the benefits Amerisure has gained from distributing exclusively through the best independent agents."

ISO certification

DeMattia Group of Plymouth, a full-service real estate development, design and construction

firm, has achieved ISO 9001 certification. This makes DeMattia Group one of the first fully integrated design/build and development firms in the country to be ISO 9001 certified.

"We are proud that our quality management system has been able to meet the rigorous ISO 9001 standards," said Richard Levin, president. "This certification reflects DeMattia Group's continuing leadership in the industry, as well as our commit-

ment to provide the highest quality services to our clients."

Excellence award

Johnson Controls of Plymouth has received Ford Motor Co.'s 1999 World Excellence Award in the gold category for the automotive batteries it supplies. Johnson Controls was one of only 11 Ford suppliers around the world to receive the Award for 1999.

"The suppliers who have earned the World Excellence

Award are members of an exclusive world-class club," said Carlos Mazzorin, Ford group vice president of global purchasing and South America. "This award honors the best and it gives Ford Motor Co. the opportunity to recognize its suppliers for their successful results in 1999."

Johnson Controls supplies 11 Ford plants in North and Central America, as well as plants in South America, India, South Africa, Germany and Belgium.

Office to race track

Two of Plymouth-based Johnson Controls' "Peer Partners" have extended their relationship with the company from the office to the race track. Gentex Corp. and Microchip Technology Inc. have signed on as associate sponsors with Team HomeLink Racing for the 2000 BFGoodrich Tires Trans-Am Series. This is the second consecutive year that the two companies have been involved as associate sponsors.

"We are pleased that Gentex and Microchip Technology have once again signed on as associate sponsors with Team HomeLink Racing," said Michael Suman, group vice president of advanced sales, marketing and development. "These partners have been important to our success with HomeLink and continue to play an important role as Paul Gentilozzi begins his quest for a third consecutive championship."

IF YOU'RE MAKING PLANS TO ADVERTISE

REMEMBER:

WHEN IT COMES TO THE SUBURBS,
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COVER THE MAP.

BUSINESS CALENDAR

Items from the Observer/and area for the Business Calendar can be sent to: Observer Newspaper, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia, MI 48150 attention: Business Calendar.

TUE, MAY 9

CAREER WOMEN

The West Suburban chapter of the National Association of Career women will meet at 11:45 a.m. at Ernesto's, 41661 Plymouth Road, Plymouth. Guest speaker Ron Koller will speak about "Groups that work, and those that don't." The cost is \$18 for members and \$22 for non-members. Call Tracey Huff at (248) 847-3355.

WED, MAY 10

BUSINESS NETWORK INTL

Laurel Park Chapter meets 7-8:30 a.m., Archie's Restaurant, 30471 Plymouth Road, Livonia. Call (810) 823-3800.

FRI, MAY 12

BUSINESS NETWORK INTL

Livonia Chapter meets 7-8:30 a.m., Residence Inn by Marriott, Fox Drive and Six Mile between I-275 and Haggerty. Call (810) 823-3800.

FRI, MAY 12

Fiesta Hispana Ball

The Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce hosts its 11th Anniversary Fiesta Hispana Ball at the Ritz Carlton in Dearborn. The VIP reception begins at 6:30 p.m. followed by dinner and dancing at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Bo Anderson, executive in charge of worldwide purchasing for General Motors Corp., is event chairman. The ball provides an opportunity to network with business representatives and meet corporate sponsors. For tickets, contact MHCC at (248) 208-9915.



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