

## ***The Bulletin***

### **Technical Tips**

By Tom Snyder Ph.D.

#### **Small Firms Tame Viruses and Worms by Practicing their ABC's.**

In a random survey of 300 companies by ICSA Labs, 92 had major virus incidents (defined as 25 or more computers infected by a single virus in the same incident) in 2003, up from 80 the year before. The average cost to recover from the incidents also increased to almost \$100,000, up from \$81,000. The most common recovery cost was less than \$10,000. In addition, the survey determined that viruses are spreading more quickly and becoming more sophisticated.

In this increasingly dangerous environment, how do organizations, especially smaller ones with fewer resources begin to manage?

99% of the smaller organizations we work with don't get infected by diligently practicing the following computer security basics.

- Install a virus protection program such as Symantec or McAfee

- Configure the program to update automatically every day

- Use the anti-virus Management Console to ensure users can't disable their anti-virus software

- Check to make sure that anti-virus definitions are updating daily , your license isn't about to expire and new computers have anti-virus software installed

- Configure laptops to updated their anti-virus definitions anytime they log onto the internet

- Use a more secure computer operating system such as Windows NT, 2000, XP or a flavor of UNIX rather than Windows 95/98 or ME.

- Patch the operating system weekly

- Install a firewall such as Sonicwall or Cisco PIX

- Use numbers and letters in your passwords to make them harder to guess

- Don't open e-mail attachments unless you are expecting them or are sure they are safe

If you are diligent with the aforementioned practices, does it mean you'll never get infected?

Unfortunately, not. Nothing is ever 100% sure. For example, there's always the

chance that your computers can become infected before the anti-virus or patching companies release an update. However, the chance of getting infected is much lower if you practice key security basics.

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===== If you have questions or concerns about your particular situation, please e-mail me at [tpsnyder@xantrion.com](mailto:tpsnyder@xantrion.com). I will use your input to direct future columns. =====