

Security Alert – Yahoo email accounts compromised

Usernames and passwords of some of Yahoo's email customers have been stolen and used to gather personal information about people those Yahoo mail users have recently corresponded with, the company said Thursday.

Yahoo didn't say how many accounts have been affected. Yahoo is the second-largest email service worldwide, after Google's Gmail, according to the research firm comScore. There are 273 million Yahoo mail accounts worldwide, including 81 million in the U.S.

It's the latest in a string of security breaches that have allowed hackers to nab personal information using software that analysts say is ever more sophisticated. Up to 70 million customers of Target stores had their personal information and credit and debit card numbers compromised late last year, and Neiman Marcus was the victim of a similar breach in December.

Yahoo Inc. said in a blog post on its breach that "The information sought in the attack seems to be names and email addresses from the affected accounts' most recent sent emails."

That could mean hackers were looking for additional email addresses to send spam or scam messages. By grabbing real names from those sent folders, hackers could try to make bogus messages appear more legitimate to recipients.

It's much more likely that an individual would click on something from you if we email all the time,

The bigger danger: access to email accounts could lead to more serious breaches involving banking and shopping sites. That's because many people reuse passwords across many sites, and also because many sites use email to reset passwords. Hackers could try logging in to such a site with the Yahoo email address, for instance, and ask that a password reminder be sent by email.

Because so many people use the same passwords across multiple sites, it's possible hackers broke in to some service that lets people use email addresses as their usernames. The hackers could have grabbed passwords stored at that service, filtered out the accounts with Yahoo addresses and used that information to log in to Yahoo's mail systems, said Johannes Ullrich, dean of research at the SANS Institute, a group devoted to security research and education.

Action to take: Resetting your email password is your best advice for reducing the compromise of your account. For best practices on password creation and keeping your data secure see [password](#) tips on the City of Albuquerque security eweb at [CABQ Cyber Security](#).

As always, if you need assistance please contact the ITSD Service Desk at 768-2930