

Don't Open That E-Mail!

It seems that virus writers are getting more and more ingenious. It is getting increasingly harder to stay virus free even with a good anti-virus program running on your PC. I've recently had to clean up some really nasty ones that slipped through both McAfee and Norton Anti-Virus, two of the leading anti-virus programs on the market.

How does this happen? Any anti-virus program is only as good as the latest virus definition update it has received. Virus definitions are kind of like a picture book of known criminals in your area. If you see someone that looks suspicious you look in the book and find his picture - if he's there then he's a criminal (provided the book is up-to-date). But supposing a new criminal moves into your neighborhood and your book is 2 weeks old, then there is no way to really know if he is a criminal or not. That's the way anti-virus programs work. Unfortunately, viruses are now spreading so fast that they often times get to your computer ahead of the latest definitions.

Last week I encountered the W32.Swen.A virus for the first time. This virus comes disguised as an urgent e-mail from Microsoft advising you of a Microsoft Internet Update Pack or Microsoft Security Update with an attached file. The message looks very realistic with Microsoft logos on it, but I assure you it is NOT from Microsoft. If you open the attachment at all, you are in for a real surprise. The best thing to do at that point is to shut off your computer and take it in to a pro. Removal of this virus is extremely difficult and should not be attempted by anyone that is not experienced with editing the windows registry.

I firmly believe anyone caught writing or spreading a virus should be caned in public and then have their mouse-clicking finger cut off, but I digress. NEVER open mail from anyone you don't know and make sure you have a current working anti-virus program running at all times.