

Stop Spam and Viruses at Same Time

By Jim Edwards

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The recent outbreak of viruses caused no end of headaches for those infected as well as computer users who repeatedly received tainted email.

Though this virus didn't rate high for physical destruction, it did rate as one of the wildest and most criminally intent viruses ever.

"Bad Trans" reportedly logs actual keystrokes and then transmits credit card and password data it captures to the person who released it.

If that isn't scary enough, the old safety rule of "you have to open the attachment to get the virus" doesn't apply here! Anyone using Microsoft Outlook or Outlook Express runs the risk of infection if they use the preview pane - which most do.

Virtually anyone who had their anti-virus software up to date found the virus relatively easy to stop before infecting the system, but they also found dealing with the virus highly inconvenient.

Every time an infected email arrived they had to stop and clean it up.

Adding to the inconvenience - this latest virus carries a 40K attachment, no small file on a dial-up connection, especially if

you get it emailed to you several times a day.

Quite frankly, I got extremely tired of downloading this virus, which seemed to come in wave after wave.

Out of curiosity, I looked to see if I could find a program that would let me check my email before downloading it.

I went to the popular download site <http://www.download.com> and started looking around.

After some searching I discovered a program called "Spam Buster", a free program that allows you to check the headers in your email box before downloading to your computer.

What makes the program so great is that you can see who the email is from, the subject line (a big spam tip-off), the name, size of the file and the date.

Now this solution won't apply in every instance (no solution ever does) but it really helped out this time.

Every version of the virus I saw carried two easily identifiable characteristics - an re: in the usually blank subject line and an underscore (_) in front of the return email address.

With this program I was able to immediately spot the virus and eliminate it with a simple mouse click.

However, I noticed an excellent side benefit!

I also eliminated the vast majority of unsolicited email bombarding my computer daily.

Rather than wait for dozens of messages to download, I quickly click the message subjects and push delete.

What a time saver!

This last wave of viruses should teach all of us that prevention and preparation hold the key to keeping our online sanity.

Make sure to keep your anti-virus program updated weekly and consider checking your email before it ever downloads to your computer.

Furthermore, expect viruses to get more sophisticated and more destructive, and it is your responsibility to protect your computer, your data, and personal information.

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