CSM Launches New Security Upgrades July 1

Anyone who follows the news or watches TV knows that identity theft is a hot topic and one that can result in serious consequences unless precautionary actions are taken to prevent it. In order to enhance the security of our electronic data and systems, CSM is introducing a series of security upgrades that will be implemented throughout the summer. On Tuesday, July 1, CSM will launch the first phase of these new security upgrades.

These security enhancements range from new security training courses to hardening of passwords. The list of enhancements to be implemented this summer is as follows:

1. Hardening of Novell Passwords – For Novell access, users will have to adopt a password of a minimum character length with the use of both numbers and letters. Required minimum length and characters are set like my.CSMD. This will make it more difficult for unauthorized users to guess an individual’s password.

2. Auto PC Time Out – PCs will automatically be timed out after 10 minutes of inactivity through the use of a universal screen saver program. Users returning to a timed-out PC will have to reenter his or her password in order to regain access to the network. This will ensure that unattended computers will not become accessible to unauthorized users. This screen saver will not interfere with other programs running on the computer.

3. Limited Administrative Rights on CSM Personal Computers – With the upgrade to the Microsoft Windows 7 Operating System, the default installation will be set for normal user privileges. This is being done because there is a separation of administrative privileges from normal user privileges that makes an operating system more resistant to viruses and other malware, and the lack of this separation in these operating systems has been cited as a major source of insecurity.

4. New Security Training Class - Advanced Information Security – join the CSM network security administrator and build on what you learned in the Information Security Basics course. We will delve further into the types of threats out there like hackers, worms, Trojans, malware, and viruses, as well as concepts like social networking and the complications that children using the Internet adds to the mix. You will visit sites aimed at assessing your knowledge, and many that will provide a host of tools. The next scheduled class is June 16. Additional security training classes, both basic and advanced, will be scheduled for faculty prior to the beginning of the fall 2010 semester.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: Will my user name and password change?  
A: Your user name will not change. However, the next time your current Novell password expires, your new password will be subject to a more secure password policy. Hardening of GroupWise passwords will not be part of this phase but will be implemented this fall. Note: This is the same level of security currently applied to all my.CSMD accounts. The minimum password length is eight (8) characters and it must contain a mix of numbers and letters.

Q: When is Windows 7 going to be installed?  
A: Information Technology Services (ITS) has already started installing Windows 7 on a limited number of test PCs. The remaining systems will be installed starting in the summer, beginning with academic areas, and continue throughout the fall.

Q: How will having normal user privileges impact the daily usage of my PC?  
A: For most users, they will not notice a difference in the daily operation of their computers unless they are trying to install additional software. Approved software can still be installed with ITS assistance by calling the Help Desk.

Q: Can I install software upgrades on Windows 7 myself?  
A: You will be able to install all software upgrades that can be automatically downloaded (e.g. Adobe); all other software will require the assistance of ITS for installation. More information on this process will be distributed prior to its implementation.

Q: Can I install my own screen saver?  
A: Initially no. The default screen saver will contain a “scrolling CSM marquee.” Once Windows 7 has been fully deployed, ITS will investigate the reintroduction of personal screen savers to determine if they present a security risk.

Q: Am I required to take the new advanced security training?  
A: Yes, if you wish to maintain remote access to the CSM network; otherwise, only the basic security training class is required.

Q: Is there any training available for Windows 7?  
A: Windows 7 training courses are available on our online SkillPort training site until September 30, 2010. This training is free to all CSM employees. There are also Windows 7 training tutorials available at Microsoft.com. More information on Windows 7 training will be distributed throughout the summer.

Q: Are there other resources on security and identity theft that I can review?  
A: Yes, a good starting point is the cybersecurity site on our Intranet: www.hawk.csmd.edu/its/Cybersecurity.

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