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October Is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month!

October is National Cyber Security Awareness Month. Now in its 17th year, National Cybersecurity Awareness Month (NCSAM) continues to raise awareness about the importance of cybersecurity across our nation, ensuring that we all have the resources to be safer and more secure online. Although cybersecurity should remain at the forefront every day, National Cyber Security Awareness Month features collaborations from the industry's best on how to make the Internet safer for everyone.

Each year, the campaign tries to raise awareness and educate the public and businesses on the dangers that lurk on the Internet while also addressing certain themes. This year, the theme is "Do Your Part. #BeCyberSmart." This theme encourages individuals and organizations to own their role in protecting their part of cyberspace, stressing personal accountability and the importance of taking proactive steps to enhance cybersecurity. Each day we depend on technology to complete our daily activities as well as perform some of our most important civic duties.

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Abingdon Virginia, East
276-628-3838

Abingdon Virginia, West
276-628-9558

Bridgewater Virginia
540-828-2020

Bristol Virginia, East
276-466-9222

Bristol Virginia, West
276-669-1122

Bristol Tennessee, Volunteer Pkwy
423-652-2022

Christiansburg Virginia
540-260-9060

Fairlawn Virginia
540-633-3793

Gray Tennessee
423-467-9966

Harrisonburg Virginia
540-434-0671

Johnson City Tennessee
423-975-9900

Kingsport Tennessee
423-246-3700

Lebanon Virginia, East
276-889-3401

Lebanon Virginia, West
276-889-4622

Lynchburg Virginia
434-455-0888

Norton Virginia
276-679-7401

Staunton Virginia
540-885-8000

Verona Virginia
540-248-7700

Waynesboro Virginia
540-943-5020

Wise Virginia
276-328-3439

Wytheville Virginia
276-228-1125

Operations Center
276-623-2265

Especially during this time while we are still in a pandemic, cybercriminals are using this to conduct an unprecedented amount of attacks. It is imperative that we all work together to keep the online space protected and safe.

This month's events include the following:

- *October 1 and 2: Official NCSAM Kick-off*
- *Week of October 5 (Week 1): If You Connect It, Protect It*
- *Week of October 12 (Week 2): Securing Devices at Home and Work*
- *Week of October 19 (Week 3): Securing Internet-Connected Devices in Healthcare*
- *Week of October 26 (Week 4): The Future of Connected Devices*

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has provided great tools and resources on their website to help educate online users and encourage everyone to spread the word through social media hashtags or just through simple conversations with friends and loved ones.

The STOP. THINK. CONNECT. campaign is another tool used to reach a global audience to promote a more secure online environment. This campaign not only educates, but it also provides great tools as well. STOP. THINK. CONNECT. is part of an unprecedented effort among federal and state governments, industry, and non-profit organizations to promote safe online behavior and practices. It is a unique public-private partnership, implemented in coordination with the National Cyber Security Alliance and it encourages Americans to view Internet safety as a shared responsibility–at home, in the workplace, and in our communities.

One of the great things about the STOP. THINK. CONNECT. campaign is that it does not just deal with the threats that can possibly affect companies and organizations, but also deals with everyday situations that children and parents deal with such has tax cyber scams, online shopping and cyber safety rules for kids. The website provides informative articles written by industry leaders; tips on how to educate employees on cyber threats and how to prevent breaches; the latest cyber regulatory and policy information; how to talk to your teens about conducting themselves online and much more.

Our world is becoming more digitalized. While that brings more efficiency and cost savings, it also brings the possibility of cyber threats and attacks. These are best combated by sharing vital information and making sure each one of us is educated on the potential risk. It is not only important for businesses and families, but it also protects our nation's economic future and supports our national interest. So, in the month of October, take some time to visit some of the below websites. Learn how you can get involved and be empowered to protect not only yourself while you are at work but, your friends, family and your community.

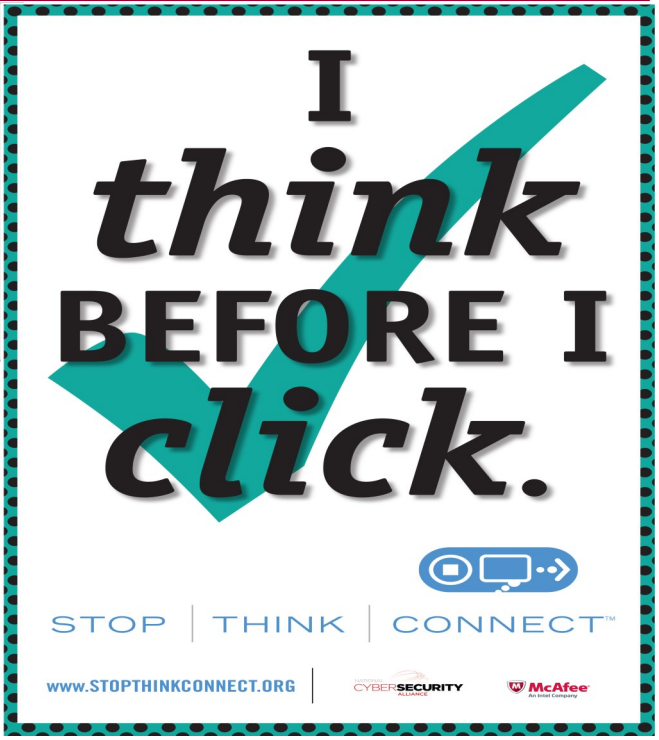
https://www.stopthinkconnect.org/

https://www.cisa.gov/national-cybersecurity-awareness-month-resources

https://staysafeonline.org/

Sources:
https://www.stopthinkconnect.org/
https://www.cisa.gov/national-cybersecurity-awareness-month-resources
https://staysafeonline.org/

Think Before You Click: Fake Pop-Up Alerts



One of the key themes of National Cybersecurity Awareness Month is to remind online users to "Think Before You Click". Everyday cybercriminals are busy at work trying to find new ways to steal sensitive data, money and unfortunately in some cases, identities.

One way they have been successful is through fake pop-up alerts. If you were not aware, advertising on websites and social media is a big revenue booster for many companies. In 2019 the Digital 2019 report by HootSuite and We Are Social showed the average consumer spent more than 6 hours online per day. Although the numbers are not out for 2020, it is predicted that that number would have grown. And now that majority of the work force is performing their duties at home due to the pandemic, the numbers will surely surpass whatever was predicted for this year. The longer we stay on line the more likely we may be a target for one of these pop-up alert scams. Cybercriminals are all too aware of these statistics and have taken aim at online advertising and exploiting web advertising networks with fake pop-up alerts.

Pop-up ads are not new; however, these new ads are now geared towards playing on users fear and trying to get them to purchase unnecessary services and products. For example, while browsing the internet a pop-up may appear that says your antivirus may be expired, or your password manager software has detected that your passwords have been compromised and need to be changed immediately. But these pop-ups are not just on your computer, they are also on mobile devices. Some may be so descriptive that they mention your cell phone device model urging you to call a number they provide right away to fix whatever issue they mention.

Browser developers have been tirelessly at work trying to mitigate the damages these fake pop-ups can cause, however we all know that nothing is foolproof. These types of scams have stolen tens of millions of dollars from their victims each year, and because of that, it is important to know what to look for. The good thing is that, just like phishing scams, these often will have strange spellings, wordings and grammar. If you pay close attention, you should be able to spot out the discrepancies. Sometimes they will include a time clock making you feel rushed and nervous if you don't do what the pop-up states in the allotted amount of time.

So, what do you do if you encounter one of these fake pop-ups? Close your browser! In some cases, you may not be able to close the browser and may need to shut down the device completely and reboot. You may also want to consider looking into tools that prevent ads from appearing on your page altogether. And lastly, education. National Cybersecurity Awareness Month is geared towards helping teach online users on how to spot possible scams and other types of phishing tricks. If you know what to look for (e.g., the misspellings mentioned above) and remember to not click on suspicious ads or links, you are less likely to become a cybercriminal's next victim.

Sources:
Author by Sean Gallagher, Fake web alerts – how to spot and stop them https://nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2020/09/09/fake-web-alerts-how-to-spot-and-stop-them/
https://www.digitalinformationworld.com/2019/02/internet-users-spend-more-than-a-quarter-of-their-lives-online.html