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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Email Hackers Target Accounts with Vulnerable Passwords
Hackers make it seem like relatives, close friends or colleagues are asking for your help

Hagatna, Guam- Computer hackers have stolen a list of personal contacts out of two local community members' email accounts. Adding to the severity of the situation is what these hackers do with the information.

The scam artist selects one of these addresses and sends an email imploring for help through means of an emergency monetary donation. This is a serious threat to consumers because they are in the belief that they are receiving a distressed email from a relative, close friend, or colleague.

The following emails were sent to two separate consumers from an email address on their contact list:

- *Hope you get this on time. Sorry I didn't inform you about my trip, because it was impromptu. I had to be in Spain for a program. The program was successful but my journey has turned sour. I misplaced my wallet on my way to the hotel which contained some cash, credit cards and my cell phone. Presently my passport and my things are been held down by the hotel management pending payment.*

Please, I need you to help me with a loan of 2,450 Euros to pay my hotel bills and to get my sorry self back home. I've been to the embassy and police, but they are not responding to the matter effectively. I will appreciate whatever you can afford to assist me with, I will return the money back to you as soon as I return, let me know if you can be of any help ASAP. I currently don't have a phone where I can be reached. Please let me know immediately.

- *Hope you get this on time, I made a trip this past weekend to Malaga, Spain and had my bag stolen from me with my passport and credit cards in it. The embassy is willing to help by letting me fly without my passport, I just have to pay for a ticket and settle hotel bills. Unfortunately for me, I can't have access to funds without my credit card. I've made contact with my bank but they need more time to come up with a new one. I was thinking of asking you to lend me some quick funds that I can give back as soon as I get in. I really need to be on the next available flight.*

I can forward you details on how you can get the funds to me. You can reach me via email or May Field Hotel's desk phone, the numbers are: +349524034361 or +349524074344.

Attorney General Rapadas warns the community to immediately change passwords to email accounts or any other online account that has private information; hackers have likely figured out the password.

"Make your passwords complex and difficult; add lots of numbers and symbols to protect your accounts from what is called dictionary attacks, which automatically checks your password against a list of standard words," warns AG Rapadas.

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According to an article on CNNMoney.com, the number one way hackers get into protected systems is by guessing the password. Easily guessable or entirely blank passwords were the most common vulnerability.

The article also states that the most common password used on business systems is "Password1" or some variation of it. It is popularly used because it satisfies the complexity rules for many systems, including the default settings for Microsoft's widely used Active Directory identity management software.

Oftentimes, once an email address has been compromised, or "hijacked", the scammers control the situation and can easily access a name from your address book to legitimize the scam operation.

Consumers should take caution when someone from your contact listing sends you an email asking for money. Telephoning the individual is the best form of verification to confirm that the email you received truly came from them.

"Do not send money until you have telephoned the individual who is asking for monetary help. If you are unable to get a hold of them, call their children, husband, or employer to confirm if the distressed email is true," said AG Rapadas.

Consumers are asked to report any such emails to: **Bernie Alvarez, Consumer Advocate for the Office of the Attorney General at 475-3324 ext. 171 or to email the information to: balvarez@guamattorneygeneral.com**

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