

Crime Prevention Newsletter

BNSF Headquarters Resource Operations Center
Fort Worth, Texas

September 2009

'Vishing' **A New Phone Identity Theft Ploy**

The FBI warns of a new type of telephone fraud to trick consumers out of their personal information.

The Internet Crime Complaint Center is warning consumers about a new kind of cyber attack involving **vishing (Voice Phishing)**, the telephone version of computer phishing. In vishing, callers spoof Voice over Internet Protocols (VoIP) and pose as legitimate institutions, to trick targets into giving them their personal information. Victims could be at risk for identity theft, among other types of fraud.

Vishing has two forms. Instead of directing targets to a phony Web site, as is the case with phishing, a recorded phone call may tell the user to call a toll-free telephone number that purports to be that of a well-known financial institution or other entity. The caller is asked to punch in a credit card number or other personal information. Another type of vishing takes the form of an email, which asks the user to call a toll-free number and provide personal information. In both cases, *PCMagazine.com Encyclopedia* says that "because people are so used to entering credit numbers and other personal information over the phone, this [vishing] technique can be highly effective."



Hackers conducted a recent wave of vishing attacks by exploiting a weakness in early versions of Asterisk software, widely used software developed to integrate PBX systems with digital Internet voice calling services. The weakness enabled the

hackers to use the software as an automatic dialer, generating thousands of vishing telephone calls to consumers in an hour.

If consumers fall victim to this fraud, they will be at risk for identity theft, credit card fraud, and a host of other crimes.

To help prevent this, the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) urges people to never release their personal information in response to unsolicited telephone calls.

The U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) are developing new ways to counter identity theft. A recent President's Identity Theft Task Force report emphasizes that government, the private sector, and consumers, must be adaptable as new generations of identity thieves develop new techniques. The full task force report and other information on efforts to combat ID theft are available at www.idtheft.gov.

- Article by Martin W.G. King, NCPC Staff



Have questions or comments? Contact ROCC Headquarters Crime Prevention Specialists: R. Carnes, B. Contreras, J. Edwards or M. Galindo at 593-7200.