Norton Consumer Cyber Safety Pulse Report Finds Tech Support Scams are the No. 1 Phishing Threat

2021-10-19

New Threat Insights Identified Across Gaming, Banking, Gift Cards and Religious Institutions

TEMPE, Ariz., Oct. 19, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- NortonLifeLock's global research team, Norton Labs, today published its third quarterly Consumer Cyber Safety Pulse Report, detailing the top consumer cybersecurity insights and takeaways from July to September 2021. The latest findings show tech support scams, which often arrive as a pop-up alert convincingly disguised using the names and branding of major tech companies, have become the top phishing threat to consumers. Tech support scams are expected to proliferate in the upcoming holiday season, as well as shopping and charity-related phishing attacks[1].

Norton blocked more than 12.3 million tech support URLs, which topped the list of phishing threats for 13 consecutive weeks between July and September. The effectiveness of this type of scam has escalated during the pandemic due to consumers' increased reliance on their devices to manage hybrid work schedules and family activities.

"Tech support scams are effective because they prey on consumers' fear, uncertainty and doubt to trick recipients into believing they face a dire cybersecurity threat," says Darren Shou, head of technology, NortonLifeLock. "Awareness is the best defense against these targeted attacks. Never call a number listed on a tech support pop-up, and instead reach out to the company directly through their official website to validate the situation and next steps."

Norton successfully blocked nearly 860 million Cyber Safety threats over the past quarter, including 41 million file-based malware, 309,666 mobile-malware files, nearly 15 million phishing attempts and 52,213 ransomware detections.

Additional findings from the Consumer Cyber Safety Pulse Report include:

- **Virtual gaming goods have real value:** Rare, in-game items are highly sought after and can be traded on real-world marketplaces. For example, a multiplayer online role-playing game touts a virtual blue "Party Hat," which was most recently valued at approximately $6,700. Norton Labs caught a new phishing campaign specifically designed to obtain players' login credentials and two-factor authentication information with the intent to steal and sell such high value virtual items.
- **Fraudulent online banking pages are convincing:** Norton Labs researchers identified a punycode phishing campaign targeting bank customers with a near carbon copy of the real banking homepage to trick them into entering their credentials.
- **Stolen gift cards are (almost) as good as cash:** Especially as the holidays near, consumers should be aware that gift cards are a prime target for attackers because they typically have lower security than credit cards and aren't tied to a specific person's name. Further, many gift cards are made by the same company with a 19-digit number and 4-digit PIN. Attackers use websites intended to check a gift card's

balance to uncover valid card number and pin combinations, giving them full access to the funds.

- **Hackers continue to target the Roman Catholic Church and the Vatican:** New Norton Labs research shows hackers, potentially operating out of China, have been targeting the Roman Catholic Church and the Vatican. In one case, researchers found targeted malware in files that appear to be legitimate Vatican-related documents but infect the devices of users who access the documents. In a second instance, computers located in the Vatican were found to have malware installed. While this type of targeted attack is usually associated with large organizations, people belonging to special interest groups, dissidents or individuals with influential jobs may also be subject to similar attacks, and general consumers should stay vigilant against phishing campaigns and infected webpages.

For more information and Cyber Safety guidance, visit the Norton Internet Security Center.

About NortonLifeLock Inc.
NortonLifeLock Inc. (NASDAQ: NLOK) is a global leader in consumer Cyber Safety, protecting and empowering people to live their digital lives safely. We are the consumer's trusted ally in an increasingly complex and connected world. Learn more about how we're transforming Cyber Safety at www.NortonLifeLock.com.

###

Jenna Torluemke

NortonLifeLock Inc.

(650) 527-6015

Jenna.Torluemke@nortonlifelock.com

Heaven Lampshire

Edelman for NortonLifeLock Inc.

(541) 852-7885

Heaven.Lampshire@edelman.com

_____

[1] No one can prevent all cybercrime or identity theft.

View original content to download multimedia:https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/norton-consumer-cyber-safety-pulse-report-finds-tech-support-scams-are-the-no-1-phishing-threat-301402814.html

SOURCE NortonLifeLock Inc.