Cancer Center Email Policy

History

It has come to our attention that the majority of viruses that infect Cancer Center computers come by way of people checking their email outside of the Cancer Center email server (usc.edu or personal emails). The Cancer Center has used Microsoft Exchange Server for many years and has also been using virus protection software at the server which prevents individual computers from becoming infected. We have tried for several years to educate people to the dangers of opening email attachments but still have many infections during every major outbreak which require our intervention. The Cancer Center employs only one individual to support over 600 computers and cannot take the risk of a major computer virus epidemic nor easily recover from one.

Purpose

The Cancer Center has made a significant investment in software and hardware to support an email system that continues to provide a centralized resource to Cancer Center Members and Employees within the Norris and Topping Towers, CRL and supported County facilities. We are able to provide this resource to students and temporary employees only as required by their positions. The purpose of this policy is to define acceptable and supportable E-mail policy within the Cancer Center in order to maintain a secure computing environment. This policy largely applies to users of PC's running Microsoft Windows because we realize that Macintosh computers are less prone to these types of attacks but should a case arise where Macintosh computers become vulnerable then we will enforce this policy on these computers as well.

Advantages of Cancer Center Email Server

Here are a few advantages of using the Cancer Center Email Server:
1. There is no size limit when sending or receiving email attachments (ISD limits to 10 MB per email).
2. There is no limit currently invoked for the number or size of emails stored on the server (ISD limits to 75MB)
3. Email is always scanned for viruses and in most cases new viruses are caught before a definition is available because we block certain types of email attachments. The email attachment types we block are: zip, exe, pif, scr, vbs and bat. These are known to be used for sending viruses (ISD does not have any way of scanning for new, unknown viruses).
4. We currently do not require you to delete messages after a certain period of time (ISD requires emails older than 6 months to be automatically deleted).
5. All email messages, attachments, calendaring, contacts, etc are stored on our server. Therefore if you have a problem with your desktop computer you will not lose any email or other information stored in Outlook.

Email Policy

All Cancer Center Members and Employees with offices and/or lab space within the Norris and Topping Towers, CRL and supported County facilities will be required to use only the Cancer Center Email system. This means that an email address of username@ccnt.hsc.usc.edu will be assigned to all computer users within these facilities. If a user wants to continue to utilize his/her USC assigned email address, we suggest that all email be forwarded from their USC address to their Cancer Center assigned address. The Cancer Center will only be able to provide email accounts to students and temporary employees if required for their position.

Microsoft Outlook is the only supported email client for PC's running Microsoft Windows for employees covered under this policy. For Macintosh computers Microsoft Outlook or Entourage are supported. A web page (referred to as Outlook Web Access [OWA] that looks very much like the Outlook client) is also supported for viewing email. Cancer Center Members and Employees should not use any other email software (such as Outlook Express, Eudora or Web Pages [see exceptions below]) for checking personal email accounts or usc.edu email accounts while using a Cancer Center computer. If a user is found to be using a non-supported e-mail client, Cancer Center support for that client will be withdrawn/withheld. Students and temporary employees also should not use Cancer Center computers for checking their outside personal or usc.edu email accounts [see exceptions below]. Students that have their own personal laptops with resnet IP addresses assigned and have properly secured them with the latest virus protection and windows updates may use them for checking email at the discretion of their supervisors. The Cancer Center will not support cleaning viruses from student computers found to be infected and will immediately request that such a compromised machine be physically removed from our network.

The following exceptions are allowed for viewing email using a web page: faculty, staff and students may use web pages for viewing personal email addresses at the following service providers: Earthlink, AOL, Hotmail, MSN and Yahoo.

Historically, Cancer Center Employees have used their Cancer Center email address for personal use such as, paying bills and connecting to bank accounts. Cancer Center email addresses should not be used for this purpose. This has been discovered as employees leave the Cancer Center and the email account is terminated and the billing agency attempts to send an email to the now deleted email address. Also, discretion should be used when signing up for email distribution lists that are not related to business. We have found many instances of employees signing up for email distribution lists and then terminating their employment at the Cancer Center without removing themselves from the distribution list (example: David Letterman's top 10 list). When an employee terminates their employment at the Cancer Center the policy is that the Cancer Center then deletes their email account from the Cancer Center Email Server. If someone has signed up on a distribution list and terminates employment, these distribution emails still come into our server but are undeliverable. There is no mechanism for us to notify the distribution list of someone's departure. We still receive emails for these types of distribution lists years after an employee terminates their employment. This affects the performance of our email server. Distribution email lists should be minimally used with discretion and must be terminated before leaving the Cancer Center. Email distribution lists that are not Cancer Center related and any other business not related to the Cancer Center or USC should be done using a personal email address. These can be freely obtained through Hotmail or Yahoo.

Any Cancer Center computer found to be infected as a result of a violation of this policy will be immediately disconnected from the network. The lab or department responsible for that computer will be required to pay an hourly fee to an outside company for cleaning the computer and restoring it to a secure state. USC has contracted with an outside company called Transistor8. Their current hourly rates are posted on their website at http://usc.transistor8.com.

Approved by Cancer Center Executive Committee 7/26/2004