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Almost Two Million Account Passwords Stolen and Posted Online

Recent Malware Attacks Show Need for Identity Theft Protection

ATLANTA, Dec. 5, 2013 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- If you use popular social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, or have Google or Yahoo accounts, you may want to closely monitor your personal information.

According to researchers at IT security firm Trustwave, nearly two million passwords have been stolen via malware attacks and posted online. Compromised data include login credentials for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Yahoo and Google.

"Unfortunately, there's no way to completely protect yourself against breaches that happen in this way," said Scott Mitic, Senior Vice President of Equifax Personal Solutions. "Having anti-virus and anti-spyware on your computer can be helpful, but they're far from 100 percent effective."

Even the most vigilant Internet user can fall victim to a malware attack. In the case of the compromised data discovered by Trustwave researchers, it's believed that a large botnet—a network of computers infected with malware—harvested the passwords from computers without users' knowledge.

Malware like this can infect computers in a number of ways. Users may click on a link, download a file or click on a suspicious website that infects their computer with malware. Once the malware is installed, it can see whatever is typed on the computer, including passwords to social networking and online banking accounts.

"With the proliferation of attacks like these, it's more important than ever for consumers to take steps to [help protect their identity](#) and monitor their credit," Mitic said. "If you become a victim of identity theft due to a data breach or malware attack, it could be costly and time-consuming to clean up your credit."

In 2012 alone, \$4.9 billion was stolen from consumer banking accounts through malware takeovers, according to a 2013 report by Javelin Strategy & Research.

While complex and unique passwords for each of your online accounts can help limit the damage of any single account being compromised, consumers should keep an eye on their sensitive personal information. Enlisting the help of an identity theft protection product can be vital. Products such as [Equifax Complete](#)™ can monitor consumers' credit and alert them if their Social Security numbers are found on suspected Internet trading sites.

According to [IdentityProtection.com](#), if you suspect your identity has been stolen, you should immediately take the following steps:

1. Request a fraud alert from one of the three U.S. credit reporting agencies. When an alert is requested with one agency, it will also be sent to the other two.
2. Apply a security freeze to your credit file. Unlike requesting a fraud alert, you will have to contact each credit reporting agency separately to apply the security freeze.
3. Review your credit reports. Scan each of your three credit reports for accounts you don't recognize and other suspicious activity. Check your reports regularly, as new accounts can take up to six months to post.

About Equifax (NYSE:EFX)

Equifax Personal Solutions empowers consumers with the confidence and control to be their financial best. Find out more about Equifax's innovative suite of credit monitoring and identity protection products at www.equifax.com. Learn about identity theft and how to help protect yourself and your family at IdentityProtection.com. Get smart information on everything from credit to retirement, all in one place at the Equifax Finance Blog, blog.equifax.com.

Equifax is a global leader in consumer, commercial and workforce information solutions that provide businesses of all sizes and consumers with insight and information they can trust. Equifax organizes and assimilates data on more than 600 million consumers and 81 million businesses worldwide. The company's significant investments in differentiated data, its expertise in advanced analytics to explore and develop new multi-source data solutions, and its leading-edge proprietary technology enable it to create and deliver unparalleled customized insights that enrich both the performance of businesses and the lives of consumers.

Headquartered in Atlanta, Equifax operates or has investments in 18 countries and is a member of Standard & Poor's (S&P) 500® Index. Its common stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) under the symbol EFX. In 2013, Equifax was named a Bloomberg BusinessWeek Top 50 company, was #3 in Fortune's Most Admired list in its category, and was named to InfoWeek 500 as well as the FinTech 100. For more information, please visit www.equifax.com.

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