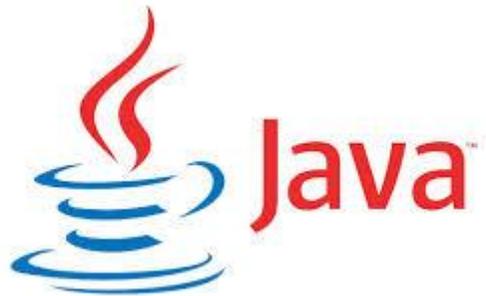


USERS BEWARE....YET AGAIN

2013 has barely begun and consumers have again been faced with new technological threats – and this time it isn't about your average virus attacks which can be averted by an installed comprehensive anti-virus system.



The most serious and far-reaching threat involves "Java." Years ago, when the internet phenomenon was being catapulted into the mainstream, Sun Microsystems now Oracle Corp. produced this software product that would be eventually be used in all types of application software and across numerous platforms: from mobile phones and GPS systems to giant servers and supercomputers, with your average PC at the heart of it all. This programming language has allowed the consumer to enjoy so much technology relatively risk-free.

Then in 2006 Sun Microsystems opened much of its Java implementation to the world under the General Public License so just about anyone was privy to its capabilities. The down side to this move has been the susceptibility of Java programming language to cyber attacks, the latest one having recently surfaced. This new attack executes a code on any PC running Java (which means just about everyone) and go on to commit online crimes such as the theft of someone's identity, phishing and credit card use. As of this writing, Oracle Systems have still not come up with a sure-fire practical fix....the problem for the PC user being that so many web pages need Java to work properly.

Another recent form of cyber attack has been the acquisition of an email user's contact list to send links to malicious sites. The mail recipient thinks the incoming mail was from their friendly contact but in reality has been hijacked by someone in a second or third-world country. Coming from a friend, the user usually would not question the mail's content and go on to click on the link.

Many more people are becoming daily internet users, particularly those of the senior generation. Kids and grandkids have given their parents and grandparents the newest devices out there, like the iPad and versatile, travel-friendly laptops. The exposure to cyber threats continues to grow incrementally but should not be a deterrent to enjoying the features and benefits of our technological present and future. As we have so often said, simple habits like responding only to known contacts, and being aware of mindless clicking on anything that jumps out are ordinary safeguards. Cyber threats are here to stay as are tech users....the trick for consumers is to stay just one step ahead.