Protection from Hackers

Sheriff Fontoura Offers Advice to Protect Your PC From Hackers

Hackers are turning their sights on your home computer. They can steal your identity, destroy your data or use your computer to launch attacks on Web sites and your friends.

Why attack a home PC? Many home computers are now as powerful as business computers with enough memory and processing power to make them alluring staging areas for wide-scale Internet attacks that affect other computers. A growing number of PCs are connected directly to the Internet via high-speed DSL and cable lines that remain open all the time. Computers left on all the time are vulnerable.

What can you do to discourage hackers?

- Use strong passwords. Choose passwords that are difficult or impossible to guess. Mix up letters and numbers in your passwords and use a different password for each account. Never write your password down on a piece of paper.

- Make regular back-ups of critical data.

- Use virus protection software. Check daily for new virus updates and regularly scan all your files for viruses.

- Do not open e-mail attachments from strangers.

- If you get an e-mail that warns about a virus, visit an anti-virus company Web site first to check whether it is a hoax. Do not forward virus hoax e-mails.

- Regularly download security patches from your software vendors, especially from your operating system vendor, such as Microsoft.