

Scam Alert - Ransomware Threat Demands PC Users Pay Or Else

A threat previously seen mostly in Eastern Europe has recently hit the United States. Known as ransomware, the scheme is essentially online extortion that involves infecting a user's computer with a virus that locks it. Users are told that the only way to get their machines back is to pay a steep fee — usually a few hundred dollars.



Security researchers estimate that about three percent of compromised computer owners fall for the scheme and pay. Why? They act impulsively due to fear and panic. These cybercriminals flash messages claiming to be from local law enforcement agencies accusing users of visiting illegal pornography, gambling, or piracy sites. Users may also be told that if they attempt to unlock the computer on their own, it will lead to the deletion of all files, videos, photos, and documents.

Victims' computers most often become infected with ransomware after people visit compromised websites that download the program to their machines without so much as a click. Security experts warn to **NEVER PAY THE RANSOM**; you'll lose your money and probably get nothing in return. If you do fall prey to ransomware, a number of legitimate security vendors offer solutions for unlocking machines. Talk to a local computer technician you trust for more information.