

Malware surge, high times in Denver, equal opportunity deluge

The offbeat side of the news

By **Off Main Street** | *The Buffalo News*

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Storm sparks malware surge

Being snowed-in can lead some people to unusual pursuits, especially while on their computers.

EnigmaSoftware.com reported that malware and spyware infections in the Buffalo area during last week's heavy snowfall spiked 60 percent above the normal number of infections for the month. The company analyzed infection reports from its Buffalo customers, and compared those numbers to typical infection rates, so far this month.

When the snowstorm hit, on Nov. 18, infections in Buffalo soared 46 percent higher than the daily average that was reported from Nov. 1 to 17.

The next day, Nov. 19, the attacks skyrocketed to 75 percent higher than normal.

Over the six-day period from Nov. 18 to 23, the average number of daily infections were 60 percent higher than in the 17 days leading up to the storm, according to EnigmaSoftware.com.

"A 60 percent jump is pretty dramatic," said Patrick Morganelli, the company's senior vice president of technology. He said it was a sign that a higher concentration of people were online than is typical, which is what one might expect when thousands of people are stuck at home with no place to go.

So, just what kind of online activity could have caused the spike?

According to EnigmaSoftware.com, one of the biggest sources of spyware and malware is from people viewing adult content online.

"We're not suggesting that everyone stuck in their homes started visiting adult sites," Morganelli said. "But we do know that those kinds of sites are typically where a lot of people get infected."

Another potential source for infections is online shopping, he said.

In high style

A SUNY Fredonia State graduate has good news for four Buffalo Bills fans who don't want to wait for New York State to legalize marijuana.

If you have several hundred dollars and a pipe dream, John Lodico of Denver just had a cancellation at his bed and breakfast for next weekend, when the Bills visit the Broncos in the Mile High City.

A group of four can book space in the modest, residential-style lodging for \$320 a night. It includes breakfast, microbrew samplings, and the ability to legally smoke pot in Lodico's man cave.

If the weather cooperates, one can take a toke on his patio. He'll even get you to and from the Dec. 7 Bills-Broncos game, and to a party the day before at Lodo's Bar and Grill, home base for the Colorado Bills Backers and managed by Buffalo native Watson Cornell.

York and Dublin, Ireland, have been among the guests at Johnny Lo's since it opened in September.

"They really seem to enjoy everything we have for them," Lodico said.

Still, Denver isn't entirely nirvana for pot-loving, out-of-state travelers. Under the Colorado recreational marijuana laws, you can't light up at football games or legally bring the product you buy from Denver's cannabis retailers back home.

Equal opportunity deluge

Five of Erie County's 11 lawmakers live in areas that were walloped by the "Snowvember" storm, and – from the 7th through the 11th districts – not a single political party represented in the Legislature was spared.

The record-setting deluge dumped on Democrat Patrick Burke of South Buffalo; Republicans Ted Morton of Depew and John Mills of Orchard Park; the Independence Party's Lynne Dixon of Hamburg; and Conservative Joseph Lorigo of West Seneca.

Accordingly, regular Legislature business was suspended, including several scheduled budget hearings with county department heads. Despite that, Mills, the Legislature chairman, refused to be sidelined by the storm. He said he kept his food distribution company in Orchard Park up and running.

We trust that he did not flout of any driving bans.

Off Main Street is written by Harold McNeil, with contributions by Grove Potter and Scott Scanlon.