

29 MAR 2011 **NEWS**

## Scammers use current events to steal money, personal information

Some scammers have set up **phony disaster relief domains** that are phishing sites. The sites appear real but they are swindling people out of money and personal and confidential information, warned Alvin Estevez, president of anti-malware firm **Enigma Software Group**.

"Millions of computer users around the world began receiving aggressive spamming and phishing campaigns related to the devastation [in Japan], including emails that suggested the recipient would get \$12 million from the estate of a couple who died in the tragedy", Estevez said.

"Other tricks designed to turn you into a victim of this tidal wave of cyber trickery include lookalike YouTube, CNN, Facebook, or Twitter videos, images, or notifications that contain hidden programs or embedded material", he added.

The scams associated with the Japan tragedy are just the latest in a trend in which scammers use recent events to launch spamming, phishing, and other malware campaigns.

"Hackers are taking advantage of major news stories and utilizing them to grab the attention of people when they use their computers, mobile devices, and smart phones to steer money into their pockets from unsuspecting consumers", Estevez said.

Estevez offered five tips to avoid these scams: do not download attachments or click on web links in unsolicited emails or social networking sites; beware of pop-up screens; verify the legitimacy of the contribution recipient or other nonprofit agency before providing personal information; keep anti-virus software and spam filter up to date; and report any scam you spot to help others from becoming victims.

Scams can be reported to the **FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center**.

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