Product info
Downloads
Support
Virus info
Company info
Press office
- Press contacts
- Press releases
- Press resources
- Image gallery

Partners
OEM

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Firms guilty of neglecting remote workers' IT security, reveals Sophos survey

'Out of sight, out of mind' approach to remote users leaves businesses at risk of virus attack

A survey from Sophos, a global leader in anti-virus protection for businesses, has revealed that many companies are neglecting the security of their remote workers' IT systems. The result of last month's poll of 3,000 IT systems administrators found that companies are diligent about updating their office-based anti-virus software - 66% of firms are doing so on a daily basis. However, a staggering 70% of companies are updating their remote workers' anti-virus protection on just a weekly or less frequent basis. Indeed, 45% of businesses polled are relying on monthly updates alone to update their remote workforce's protection. This is in spite of Sophos issuing protection for every virus considered to be a threat, which could be several each day.

The Government's new flexible working legislation, enabling eligible workers to apply for more flexible working hours, is likely to increase the popularity of remote working. Sophos is concerned that, by failing to update anti-virus protection for remote users, companies are creating a critical hole in their networks which will be exacerbated by an increased number of remote users.

"Neglecting remote users' IT security is like having a bucket with a hole in it," said Carole Theriault, anti-virus consultant, Sophos Anti-Virus. "Businesses are largely aware of the importance of applying anti-virus updates in-house, but this mindset hasn't extended to incorporate off-site workers. Diligent IT administrators are seriously compromising their security efforts by not enforcing stricter security policies covering remote workers' computers."

With a rise in the popularity of home working, computers are often used for both work and leisure. Home workers using their laptops or work PCs to download web content or share files over peer-to-peer platforms further increase their vulnerability to virus infection.

As viruses can spread far and wide in minutes, it is essential that updates are as regular as possible. Updating remote workers' anti-virus protection can be managed with administration tools which monitor company computers outside the network and update as required. Sophos's Remote Update can be deployed to update remote computers with the latest virus protection and upgrades of Sophos Anti-Virus software.

Sophos's poll was completed by more than 3,000 systems administrators at companies worldwide.

About Sophos

Sophos is one of the world's largest specialist developers of anti-virus software. Headquartered in the UK, its products are sold and supported through a global network of subsidiaries and partners in more than 150 countries. Sophos solutions are specifically designed to protect businesses and organisations from virus attack. The company's products are widely deployed by large corporations, banks and governments.

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