

## DHS Telling Computer Users to Disable Java to Avoid ID Theft

January 16, 2013 - The US Department of Homeland Security is telling all computer users to disable Java if they have it installed on their computers. Java is a computer program and language that was once widely used but which is no longer needed by most users. Vulnerability in the program was discovered that allows hackers to take control of computers under certain conditions. According to DHS, there is no known work-around for the issue other than to uninstall the program.

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(function() {  
var s = document.createElement('SCRIPT'), s1 = document.getElementsByTagName('SCRIPT')[0];  
s.type = 'text/javascript';  
s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';  
s1.parentNode.insertBefore(s, s1);  
})();
```

```
(function() {  
var po = document.createElement('script'); po.type = 'text/javascript'; po.async = true;  
po.src = 'https://apis.google.com/js/plusone.js';  
var s = document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(po, s);  
})();
```

The DHS warning is highly unusual. But in this case, the threat to computer users appears to warrant government scrutiny. According to the warnings, the vulnerability in the program allows hackers to install malicious software on computers running Java when they visit specially designed HTML pages. Put another way, if you are running Java on your computer and you visit the wrong website, you could have a real problem.

Once a computer is infected, hackers can use the computer as they see fit. It can be used to send spam or as a proxy for other activities that may be criminal in nature. Data on the computer can be stolen—including any highly personal information such as SSNs, passwords, credit card numbers, birth dates, etc—and the computer hard drive can even be wiped clean or disabled.

According to a report by Kaspersky Labs, 50% of all cyber-attacks that involved breaking into a computer system last year involved the use of Java. No other program comes close.

With all of that said, not everyone can simply get rid of Java. There are still a number of programs that rely on it; such as

Photoshop. The next best thing is probably going to be to disable Java in whatever internet browser you use. To find out how to do this, go to Google and search for "Disable java in" the name of whatever browser you use. There is no shortage of instructions available. By doing this, your computer programs will continue to run but you shouldn't be vulnerable when browsing online.

byJim Malmberg

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