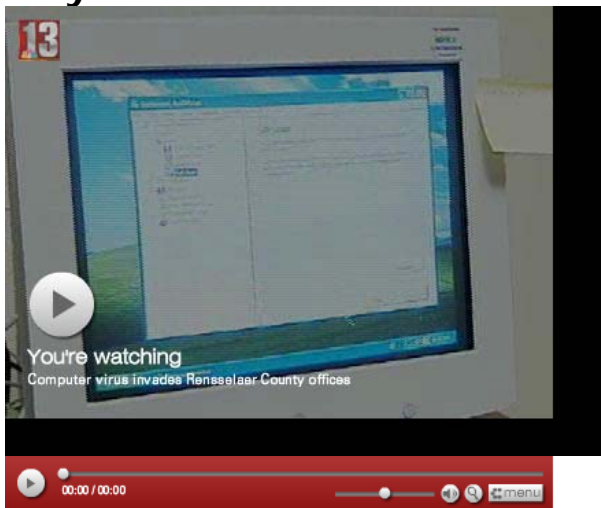


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 By: Beth Wurtmann

Computer virus invades Rensselaer County offices

TROY - Computers are getting scrubbed at the Rensselaer County office building, to clean out viruses that hacked into the system, crippling 200 desktop computers and 20 servers.

"It's been somewhat stressful. We've been putting in a significant number of hours since the beginning of the infection," said Information Services Director Vince Ruggiero.

He said they don't know where the viruses came from, but they know when.

A power outage last week led to a server corruption, and that's how the worms found their way in. It affected back office operations, like Central Services, Budget and Finance. They stressed no essential services were compromised, like Social Services, Motor Vehicles, the Jail and 911 operations.

But was it the power outage or something else that caused the virus? News Channel 13 learned that on the same day as the outage, the County switched internet service providers.

"There may be more to the story than a simple power outage," said Justin Cresswell, Director of Business Development & Internet Strategy for wsg.net. That's the company that used to hold the contract with the County. He said there's no sour grapes, but questions the level of network security as the county made the switch.

"We didn't see everything that occurred but all we know is that there seems to be a correlation between switching off of one provider onto another and some vulnerabilities that were exposed that were previously protected," Cresswell said.

"Nothing to do with it, nothing to do with it," Ruggiero said.

Ruggiero is adamant that the internet provider switch had nothing to do with the breach.

"If there were any kind of clues or inkling that something may have been missed or a vulnerability, we wouldn't have moved," he said.

County officials said they'll make sure the system is clean before getting it up and running again. Hopefully Friday afternoon, but they said that with guarded optimism.

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