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New Guide to System Protection Highlights Threats to SMEs

The average UK business receives approximately twenty computer viruses a year and has one electronic security breach a month [see note 2]. Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are particularly vulnerable – but they aren't helpless. A new guide *Protecting Your IT Systems: A Guide for SMEs*, from the independent Fraud Advisory Panel, which is supported by the Institute of Chartered Accountants, provides a concise checklist of threats and protection measures.

Co-author Steven Philippsohn remarks that “You may not have extensive PC networks but the data you have, even on one or two computers, is valuable to you, your company and your customers. It includes financial information and material protected by the Data Protection Act - which makes you liable for the safety of the personal data you collect.”

“The evidence from DTI and Hi-Tech Crime Unit surveys is overwhelming” said Mr Philippsohn. “Your IT system, whether it's a single computer, PDA or a more complex network will be the subject of infiltration or attack from internal and external sources. It's not just about hackers. 80% of fraud is caused with inside help. Any system or process is only as strong as its weakest link and that is more likely to be a human process than a piece of hardware or software. Whether you are a network administrator, own your own business or just use a PC for e-mails this Guide is for you.”

The *Guide* provides:

- A guide to internal and external risks from hacking to unprotected wireless networks
- Guidance on security and risk management
- What to do if your system is attacked

Mr Philippsohn recognised that some small firms might balk at building safeguards against employees but said: “You may trust your neighbours but you still lock your house when you leave it. Think of security software as the key to lock down your systems/PC in much the same way.”

ENDS

For Further Information

- # Sameena Khan (ICAEW Press Office) on 020 7920 8607
- # The publication can be downloaded for free from www.fraudadvisorypanel.org. Hardcopies are available for purchase at £5.00 per copy from Mia Campbell on 020 7920 8721; e-mail: info@fraudadvisorypanel.org;

Note to Editors

1. The Fraud Advisory Panel works to raise awareness of the immense social and economic damage caused by fraud and help private and public sectors fight back. It provides ideas, advice and information to Whitehall, Parliament, business, the professions and the general public. It was founded in 1998 by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) which continues to provide valuable support. Since its foundation the Panel has:
 - # raised the profile of fraud in Whitehall, helping to push the issue up the legislative and policy making agenda;
 - # developed major proposals for the reform of criminal and company law;
 - # worked to improve the anti-fraud content of business and professional education and training;
 - # commissioned important new research
 - # raised awareness of fraud and right responses to the problem through conferences, seminars and the media.
2. “The average UK business receives approximately twenty computer viruses a year and has one electronic security breach a month.” Department of Trade and Industry. *Information Security Breaches Survey 2004: technical report*, April 2004.
3. The Fraud Advisory Panel would like to thank Steven Philippsohn, Chairman of the Fraud Advisory Panel Cybercrime Working Group, and the Fraud Litigation Team at Philippsohn Crawfords Berwald together with co-authors Robert Dias, Stephen Hill, and Jack Wraith for their assistance in the preparation of this publication.
4. Whilst every effort has been made in the construction of this Guide, compliance with it does not guarantee that you and/or your business will not be a victim of fraud or criminality aimed against your business/PC systems. The Fraud Advisory Panel and the contributors to this Guide accept no responsibility for any action taken by parties as a result of reading this Guide. Readers are strongly advised to seek and obtain the appropriate professional advice on the issues raised which affect them or their business.