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Data Breaches Rose Sharply in 2008, Says Study

Jeremy Kirk, IDG News Service

Jan 7, 2009 4:40 am

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More than 35 million data records were breached in 2008 in the U.S., a figure that underscores continuing difficulties in securing information, according to the Identity Theft Resource Center (ITRC).

The majority of the lost data was neither encrypted nor protected by a password, according to the ITRC's report.

It documents 656 breaches in 2008 from a range of well-known U.S. companies and government entities, compared to 446 breaches in 2007, a 47 percent increase. Information about the breaches was collected by tracking media reports and the disclosures companies are required to make by law.

Data breach notification laws vary by state. Some companies do not reveal the number of data records that have been affected, which means the actual number of data breaches is likely much more than 35 million.

"More companies are revealing that they have had a data breach, either due to laws or public pressure," the ITRC wrote on its Web site. "Our sense is that two things are happening -- the criminal population is stealing more data from companies and that we are hearing more about the breaches."

The data breaches came from a variety of mishaps, including theft of laptops, hacking, employees improperly handling data, accidental disclosure and problems with subcontractors.

BNY Mellon Shareowner Services, an investment bank based in New Jersey, reported the highest number of breached records: 12.5 million. A box of computer tapes containing names, Social Security and account numbers was lost in February 2008. A lock on the truck transporting the tapes was broken, and the truck had been left unattended, according to news reports. The tapes were not encrypted.

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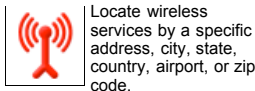
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The business community had the most breaches, comprising more than a third of the 656 breaches, ITRC said. Government and military organizations came in at 16.8 percent, the second-highest tally. However, that's an improvement over 2006, when that sector comprised nearly 30 percent of all reported data breaches, the center said.

Some 15.7 percent of all breaches were attributed to insider theft, a figure that more than doubled between 2007 and 2008, ITRC said.

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"Data Breaches Rose Sharply in 2008, Says Study" Comments

[johnfranks999](#) says:
Wed Jan 07 11:15:34 PST 2009

Re: [Data Breaches Rose Sharply in 2008, Says Study](#)

I like to pass along things that work, in hopes that good ideas make their way back to me. Data breaches and thefts are due to a lagging business culture - and people aren't getting the training they need. As CIO, I look for ways to help my business and IT teams further their education. Check your local library: A book that is required reading is "I.T. WARS: Managing the Business-Technology Weave in the New Millennium." It also helps outside agencies understand your values and practices.

The author, David Scott, has an interview that is a great exposure: http://businessforum.com/DScott_02.html -

The book came to us as a tip from an intern who attended a course at University of Wisconsin, where the book is an MBA text. It has helped us to understand that, while various systems of security are important, no system can overcome laxity, ignorance, or deliberate intent to harm. Necessary is a sustained culture and awareness; an efficient prism through which every activity is viewed from a security perspective prior to action.

In the realm of risk, unmanaged possibilities become probabilities - read the book BEFORE you suffer a breach.

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