We all fight hoaxes day after day; Aunt Betty wants us to know about the free money Microsoft will give us for forwarding some years-old undated chain letter and Uncle Ralph is terrified of needles in movie theater seats. Friend Yetta has just deleted yet another component of Windows or Java in response to a letter from Uncle Ralph and is writing to Aunt Betty about never flashing headlights at cars driving with their lights off on a freeway.

Sigh.

One of my colleagues recently pointed me to an excellent Web site that can help us train our relatives – and our employees – to check facts before they spread misinformation. Purportal.com has search-engine fields for two different Urban Legends sites, the Computer Incident Advisory Capability (CIAC) Hoax database at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory of the US Department of Energy, the Computer Emergency Response Team Coordination Center (CERT/CC) at Carnegie Mellon University and the Symantec Virus Encyclopedia.

In addition, the site offers a Rich Site Summary (RSS) field for search engines to extract information for other sites to link into it easily and some special reports on hot topics; when I visited, they included details on the Nigerian 4-1-9 Scam and 9/11 hoaxes.

The headlines were a few days old but useful nonetheless and included links to the full original articles.

The section entitled “Handy and Edifying Links” seems to have a long list of interesting and helpful sites about a wide range of topics centering on frauds and hoaxes. I particularly enjoyed the link to the NASA responses to, ah, claims that they faked the moon landings.

In summary, this site is easy to use, clearly laid out, and helpful in the battle against fraud and nonsense. I recommend that you add it to the resources that you offer your colleagues as part of the effort to bring security into their field of view. Remember, helping employees protect themselves and their families against Internet-mediated harm is an excellent way of accustoming them to thinking about security.

And it might just actually help fight the Bad Guys a bit.

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