The good news is that we have seen a slight decrease in virus infected computers. We attribute some of this to client education. At WebDispatch we regularly talk to our customers about how to avoid getting a computer virus and what to do if one hits.

How a Virus Works

The word virus is often being used as a common term for all malicious programs, but technically a virus is a program or code that attaches itself to a legitimate, executable piece of software, and then reproduces itself when that program is run. Viruses spread by reproducing and inserting themselves into programs, documents, or email attachments. They can be transmitted through emails or downloaded files and they can be present on CDs, DVDs, USB drives and any other sort of digital media.

A virus normally requires action to successfully infect a victim. For instance - the malicious programs inside email attachments usually only strike if the recipient opens them. The effect of a virus can be anything from a simple prank that pops up messages to the complete destruction of programs, operating systems and data.

Virus attacks are becoming more targeted and no longer occurring as one large outbreak. Also, there has been big increase in spam emails that contains links to download viruses. There has been a consistent increase in mobile viruses in recent years because of the increasing use of emails and Internet browsing on cellphones.

To Protect Yourself from Viruses

- Be sure to check your computer for updates regularly and set your virus protection to scan automatically.

- Remember, if you already have an anti-virus program, you don't ever need to install another one, no matter what pops up in front of you.

- Be careful what you open in your email and what you click in your browser. Only download programs from a trusted source, and never give any person information without verifying the veracity of the site in question.

- Whenever you receive an email with an attachment and you did not ask that person to send you that attachment, Delete It!

- If you receive email with links that look urgent, do not click on them. Go to the appropriate web site yourself by typing the regular address into your browser.

- If you're browsing the web and an unexpected window opens up by itself saying you have a virus or you need to download something, immediately shut down your computer. Force a power down and restart. Do not click . . .
  - the Red X
  - Yes
  - No
  - Accept
  - Decline
  - Close
  - Unsubscribe
  - or anything else