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The Monthly Brief

Volume 6 Issue 8

August 2018

Who's Watching You

Privacy concerns surrounding the cameras installed on computers and tablets have increased. Software and malware exist that when installed, allow remote access to a computer's camera. There are several cases of former spouses or paramours who then use this access to spy on or harass their ex.

Recently a series of themed email extortion scams have been circulating. They claim to have installed malware on the victim's computer and recorded them while viewing an adult website or materials.

The problem of compromised web cams has existed for years with Microsoft founder Bill Gates allegedly placing tape over the lens of his computer camera. True or not, it highlights a simple solution of covering the camera when it's not in use.

There are a number of products available that affix to a PC or tablet. Sliding the cover fully closed ensures the privacy of the owner.



As for those extortion scams, they continue to evolve, now providing victims with user names or passwords as proof they have access to the computer. The reality is that so much personal data has been stolen this is an easy con. To find out if your email has been compromised visit [HaveIBeenPwned](#) and run a free check. If so, consider replacing that email account and changing all passwords for it and any websites where it's used as a log in.

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Concealed Weapon Permit Fraud

The [Florida Department of Agriculture](#) is warning about a deceptive website (www.concealed-license.com) that charges a fee to customers to obtain a concealed weapons permit. This site is not affiliated with the Florida Department of Agriculture, the only official authority to offer concealed weapon licenses for the State of Florida.



The site's home page prominently displays options to Apply, Renew, Replace or Update a "concealed carry permit". Clicking any one will present you with a link to a very detailed application form featuring the shape and flag of Florida.

It's all designed to conceal the small print disclaimer saying the site does not actually issue licenses! In addition to asking for a ton of detailed personal info, the site's terms include: **No refunds**, regardless of outcome; **No support** in obtaining a license, just assistance in completing forms; **Service fees** don't count toward or increase the chances of obtaining a license; **Liability waiver** authorizes the use of customer info to fill out, sign or file ANY document or form on their behalf. This could easily lead to identify theft and permission to apply for credit or make purchases in the customer's name.

Do not provide this site with any personal information. If you have used this fraudulent site, you are asked to notify FDACS at 1-800-HELP-FLA or [file a complaint online](#).

*FDACS

CHARITY FRAUD CHECKER

Recently Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi announced the resolution of complaints against **Help the Vets, Inc.**, a sham veterans' charity in Orlando, Fla., and its founder, Neil Paulson. The charity is thought to have raised more than 20 million dollars nationwide based on misleading promises that the donations would assist veterans.

Charity fraud is a growing problem as unscrupulous operators use the incredible generosity of Americans to enrich themselves and the fundraising organizations they hire. In 2017 alone, Americans donated approximately \$287 billion to charities. Veteran themed charities are a favorite for crooks, targeting patriotic Americans by mimicking legitimate organizations.

The [FTC has announced](#) a major initiative to combat veteran charity fraud by partnering with law enforcement and state organizations. A consumer education initiative "[Operation Donate With Honor](#)" provides resources to [identify fraudulent charities](#). As partners in this program, Pam Bondi's office and the FL Department of Agriculture have published charity [scam ID and reporting information](#) along with the new [Charity Checker Tool](#) to help consumers **research any charity** before donating. Any service member, veteran, or military family member who encounters a scam can contact the Florida AG's [Military Assistance Program](#) or MVAP.

* FTC, FDACS, FLA AG