

The SAGATUG

INTERFACE

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The San Gabriel Valley Technology User's Group. The Club for TRSDOS and MS-DOS

Tips on Avoiding Spam

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The Gartner Group reported last year that unsolicited email (spam) has begun to overload corporate networks to the point that it's sometimes as much a threat as a denial of service attack. Spam is a serious problem for businesses as well as home users.

William Plante, Symantec's Director, Worldwide Security and Brand Protection, says "There's nothing benign about spam at all." At worst it's a malicious attempt to rip you off; at best it's a way to capture your information and resell it. Plante says there are several things you can do to reduce the amount of spam you receive.

Don't open spam email

Don't ever open email that's trying to sell you something. If you can tell an email is spam — for example, if it's coming from a sender with "special offers" or "great deals" in the return address — just delete it unread. The point of junk email isn't necessarily to sell you product; it's to

get you to open up the spam so the senders know they've got a legitimate address. A good spammer will put in a hidden return receipt code so he can tell you've opened it. Plante says that some firewalls will allow you to control what goes out as well as what comes in, so you can block the return receipt messages. If your firewall doesn't allow you to do this, you might want to upgrade.

Don't reply

Legislation passed by the Federal Trade Commission mandates that people who don't want to "opt in" to newsletters or marketing material offered via the Internet must have the option to opt out. If you want to receive a newsletter from a reputable company, you have to opt in; they won't just send it to you. But spammers have noted a loophole in the legislation, which they interpret to mean that it doesn't actually apply to email.

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Memory Jogger...

See you at the next SAGATUG meeting this Friday, January 10, 2002 from 7 to 10 p.m. at the Arcadia Park Senior Citizen's Center, 405 S. Santa Anita Ave. (See page four for directions and more upcoming events.)

Hope you had a Terrific New Years Eve and Have a Great 2003!!

Ants in My Hub Were Bugging Me

By Paul Lujan

Provided by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which SAGATUG belongs

I came home last night after a 4-1/2 hour drive back from LA (note to law enforcement officials: that's a "6" there, really), and sit down in front of the computer to check my mail. My connection is, for lack of a better word, ass-slow. I go to look at the hub to see if everyone else is having this problem.

Nope, Mike and David's activity lights are busily flickering; it's only me who has been screwed. I reach down to fiddle with the connection, and notice that the hub is covered with ants (as well as my hand, after the fiddling). "That's odd," I think to myself, "what would ants want with our hub?" But I'm way too tired to deal with it at the time, so instead I go to sleep.

I wake up this morning, and decide to investigate further. Yep, the hub is definitely swarming with ants. And it doesn't look like the ants are just going over it to somewhere else (especially since there aren't any tasty ant treats anywhere nearby); they're clearly going into and out of the hub. Some of the ants going in are even carrying little white pellets. "Is that food?" I wonder. "Where is it coming from?"

I unplug the hub and pick it up, and then kill all of the ants that come out of it. And kill some more ants. And kill some more ants. This goes on for a while. I begin to think that the little white pellets look an awful lot like eggs. I shake the hub, and it sounds like someone has poured a handful of coarse sand into it. "That's odd," I think to myself, "I could have sworn this hub didn't come with the sand option." I initially thought that there were just some ants here, but it's pretty clear I've got more on my hands now.

So, I decide to take a closer look at the hub. Unfortunately, the hub boasts a screwless construction, but I know that my screwdrivers can be used for more than merely removing screws, so I start prying. As I do so, a bunch of ants and eggs, as

well as what look like larvae (basically, they look like slightly-smaller-than-normal ants, but a very pale brown instead of black) continue to fall out (into the sink, since I've become clever enough to do this over the sink).

I finally get the thing open, and see a bunch of eggs lying on the circuit board, but less than I would have expected if there's really a colony set up here. So, I figure that they're probably under the circuit board, and set to work unscrewing the circuit board to take it out of the box.

Jackpot! (That is, if my goal were to win an ant colony, which it really **wasn't**.) The entire bottom of the box is coated with eggs, and I see a large ant which I can only assume is the queen. I terminate the queen with extreme prejudice, and then wash out the box (it's made of metal, so I figure it'll be okay.)

The circuit board, on the other hand, I can't just wash off (since I hold hopes of saving the hub, not really wanting to have to drop \$30 on a new one), and there are lots of eggs wedged in small places, like between the link lights or between the chips connected to the ports, where they'll be really hard to get out of. So, I set the circuit board aside for the moment to take a shower.

When I come back, I notice that the ants have actually done me a favor! (Suckers!) In their futile attempts to save the colony, they've picked up the eggs themselves to scurry around like maniacs, solving my problem. I pick off the ants, and then vigorously shake the board to try to dislodge any

thing still stuck in the ports, and much to my surprise another queen falls out. (I've read that Argentine ants can have more than one queen per colony, but this is still a surprise, especially since I thought I had already gotten almost everything.) I dispose of her, too, clean up the remaining ants,

and figure I might as well try putting the hub back together. Not that I can completely undo my prying, but hey, that's cosmetic anyway.



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Avoiding Spam

Don't click on the "unsubscribe" link — often it will take you to a page that doesn't exist, anyway — and know that when you "unsubscribe" to a spam email, you're just confirming your email address. You're telling them, "yes I exist and I read my email."

Never buy anything offered via spam

Don't click on the spam, don't go to the Web sites it advertises, and whatever you do, don't buy anything you learn about through spam. Plante says that just confirms that you are a buyer of products advertised via spam. You really don't want to get your name on any of those lists.

Don't give a spammer your credit card number

Plante says there are a variety of threats that come with spam email. Spam email at best is dubious in the quality of the products and services it purports to offer, and at worst it's a malicious attempt to gain access to your credit card number. "Symantec has found that credit card scammers are using our products as bait [see www.symantec.com/spamwatch/], attempting to sell Norton Internet Security 2003 at 90% off. If you are not very Internet-savvy, it looks like a great deal. The Web pages look very sophisticated. They even appear to have come from us," he says. But don't believe it. It's a scam.

Set up shell email accounts

Plante recommends that if spam has become unbearable, and if you do a lot of shopping over the Internet, you might want to use disposable email addresses to serve as mail shields. He spends \$29/year to have his own domain address, and sets up various accounts within that domain. "So, if I sign up for something at a department store and I don't want to get a bunch of email from them," he says, "I'll write in [departmentstorename]@mydomain.com. Then I tell my mail shell account that when email comes to that account they're to hold onto it. It'll just sit there until I'm ready to clear it out."

Plante has set up nearly 50 fictional email addresses that he uses when he's on the Internet. "If all of a sudden I start getting spam email to a par-

ticular address, I delete that address, so the spam just bounces off. It's well worth the \$29/year that I spend to do that; I can't begin to tell you how grateful I am to be spared all that spam." Plante says this is a solution that he finds very practical. The disadvantage is that the more shell email accounts you set up, the more time it takes to manage them. But for the sort of work he does, which involves heavy Internet use, it's very advantageous.

Get good firewall protection

Of course, Symantec has excellent products listed below to handle the problems e-mails but there is a **free alternative**. Go to www.mailwasher.net. That is a free downloadable program that checks your e-mails before you see them and warns you if each email is spam, probably spam, virus, etc. That way you can eliminate it before it can do anything.

The following are the Symantec products:

[Norton™ Personal Firewall 2003](#) protects your computer from spammers who use hidden "return receipt requested" notification to verify your email address. It keeps hackers at bay and blocks sensitive data from being sent out without your permission.

Norton Personal Firewall, Norton AntiVirus, and other indispensable Internet tools are available together as [Norton Internet Security™ 2003](#), now with an anti-spam feature.

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Ants

Much to my surprise, it actually works! And my performance is back from miserable to normal. Ants 0, Me 1.

Man, I hate ants. If I could choose one genus to completely wipe off the Earth, assuming that it wouldn't, like, destroy the ecosystem (but really, what depends on ants? Anteaters? Well, they're not doing a very good job, are they?!), it would be them. Well, okay, I suppose I should probably choose something like mosquitoes, since even though they're less personally annoying to me, they still have the whole large-scale disease-spreading thing. But I'd expect some serious compensation from the WHO for not choosing ants! --Paul Lujan. Article reproduction coordinated by Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group.§

**Next SAGATUG Meeting
Time and Place:**

7 to 10 p.m., Friday, January 10, 2003
**Arcadia Park Senior Citizen's Center, 405 South
Santa Anita Avenue, Arcadia.**
(In the park just south of Huntington Drive)
Meetings are on the second Friday of every month

Club Officers and Board Members:

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Upcoming Events:

Manhattan Beach, last Saturday, monthly, TRW Swap Meet, Admission Free.
Santa Ana, last Sunday of each odd month, ACP, 1310 E. Edinger, Admission Free.
Pomona Swap Meet 3rd Saturday, monthly, at Cal Poly Pomona, 3801 W. Temple Ave., Admission Free
Pomona Fairplex, January 18 & 19 (Sat. & Sun.) bldgs. 6 & 7at LA Fair grounds, Gate 14,Admission \$7, plus parking.
Burbank, June 21 & 22, 2003(Sat. & Sun.), Hilton Burbank Airport & Convention Center, 2500 Hollywood Way, Burbank, CA 91505. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. \$5 admission
Costa Mesa, February 15 & 16, bldg. 10, 2002, Orange County Fair and Exposition Center, 88 Fair Drive, Costa Mesa, CA 92626, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., \$5 admission
Santa Monica, (No schedule listed so far for 2003),
Del Mar, (new location) February 1 & 2, 2003 (Sat. & Sun.)Del Mar Fairgrounds, 2260 Jimmy Durante Blvd., Del Mar, CA 92014, Open 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. \$5 admission, \$7 parking

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Deadline for the Newsletter

The deadline for the INTERFACE is the last Saturday of the month.

Republication:

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Please visit the new SAGATUG website at www.sagatug.org There you will find photos of the meeting site, maps to the meeting, articles from other sources and an archive of the SAGATUG Interface.

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