

HOTMAIL

PHISHING WARNING

Trading Standards Officers in Staffordshire are warning Internet users to be wary of emails currently in circulation purporting to originate from Hotmail. The email warns recipients that their email account will be closed unless they log into their account and confirm their details. The emails contain a link which directs users to what they believe is the genuine Hotmail website, but which is in fact a spoof version, designed simply to harvest sensitive information such as usernames, passwords and dates of birth.

One Staffordshire resident fell victim to the scam and within hours the fraudsters had logged into his account and started using it for illicit means. The fraudsters emailed his contacts with a fictitious story about him being stranded in Malaysia and needing them to send him £2300 to get back home. The first the unwitting victim knew of the fraud was when he received a phone call from one of his contacts questioning the story.

The fraudsters had even changed the password to the victim's account, effectively bolting the door from the inside to prevent him access.

As usual, Officers advise users to delete suspicious emails immediately, and on no account should they click on any web links or open any attachments. If users have any doubts about whether any email or 'warning' is genuine they should check via the website of the service provider concerned.

Officers advise Internet users to ensure that their PCs are running up-to-date anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software, all of which is available free of charge for personal use. They also advise turning off any 'auto-preview' features in their email software, and encourage all email users to observe their tips for avoiding email spam ([Avoiding Spam](#)).

All our alerts are available in a range of formats and languages, including large print. Please contact Nicola Wilson if this would be helpful to you, or to someone you know.

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