

NEWS FROM SCDCA

South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs



Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston, Administrator

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Consumer Agency Warns that Scammers May Be Using Phony *YouTube* Links to Break in to Computers

Columbia, SC..... The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs, along with the SC State Library, are examples of state agencies with modest budgets that have learned to use some alternative, but economic approaches to disseminate information and education. One such way is *YouTube*, a social media site that allows users to upload video content for others to view. SCDCA currently has several videos that enjoy a large audience not just in this state, but nationally and with viewers in some 20 foreign countries. The accepted link to these spots is found on the Department's website, and that's where it will stay because scammers have found yet another way to compromise consumers by using something familiar and in the news.

Online security experts are alerting net users to be wary of messages urging them to watch the latest viral video on **YouTube**. They say it may be part of a **scam** that is **sending out tainted links** in order to ultimately break into computers and steal your personal information. The present scam is founded on the habit of net users to casually click links forwarded to them by online acquaintances, not realizing that the original message has been spoofed and the link is phony.

The scam begins with an e-mail containing links to "new" videos on YouTube that are described as "must-see." Users clicking on the link are taken to a fake website closely resembling *YouTube*. The imitation is so good most users were not able to discern that it was a fake. Users then get a message saying they must download an update in order to view the latest video.

About the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs:

Established by the Consumer Protection code in 1974, The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs represents the interests of South Carolina Consumers.

Our mission is to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, mediation, enforcement and education.

For more information, visit www.sccoconsumer.gov.

If users choose to go ahead with the download, they are unwittingly downloading malicious programming onto their computer. The malware is programmed to snoop on online computers, record keystrokes, and recover online passwords or any other confidential information stored offline by users. The victims are usually unaware of what has happened, as the message begins playing a video from the real YouTube site.

SCDCA officials encourage internet consumers to avoid clicking on links forwarded in emails – even if they look legitimate. “If you want to see what’s on YouTube, go *directly* to YouTube,” said Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston, SCDCA Administrator. “A simple search will take you to the video you want to see.” Consumers who want to view SCDCA videos may go to YouTube and type in SC Department of Consumer Affairs, or visit the Department’s website: www.sconsumer.gov for SCDCA TV and lots of other helpful information.

For more information, contact the Public Information Division at 803.734.4190, toll free in SC at 1.800.922.1594, or online at www.sconsumer.gov.

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