# Welcome to the TXDPS Cyber Security Newsletter

**One big thing: It's the Most Vulnerable Time of the Year!**



**What to know:** The holiday season is a time for celebration, but for cybercriminals, it's also a time of opportunity. While you might already know to avoid phishing emails and suspicious links, hackers are constantly evolving their tactics.

Here are some threats and tips to keep in mind this holiday season:

**Holiday Scams You Might Not See Coming**

- Fake virtual holiday parties that trick you into downloading malicious links.

- QR code scams at events or markets, redirecting you to phishing sites.

- AI-generated voice scams, where a "loved one" calls for urgent financial help.

**Are Your Decorations Watching You?**
With the rise of smart holiday tech, even your decorations could pose a threat. Devices like smart lights, connected ornaments, or digital photo frames may lack proper security. Be sure to:

- Change default passwords.

- Use separate Wi-Fi networks for these smart devices.

- Regularly update device firmware.

**Beware of Festive Fake Apps**
Some apps masquerade as holiday tools, such as gift planners or countdown calendars, but contain malware. Only download apps from official app stores.

**More Holiday Scam Resources:** https://www.knowbe4.com/typ-holiday-sat-resource-kit

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# Ignoring Software Updates

Most of us have done it  - clicked "Remind Me Later" when our phone, tablet, or laptop begged us to update. It's tempting to put it off, but ignoring software updates can leave your personal devices wide open to hackers and malware. Here's the deal: those updates aren't just for "cool" new features; they're shields against cyber threats.
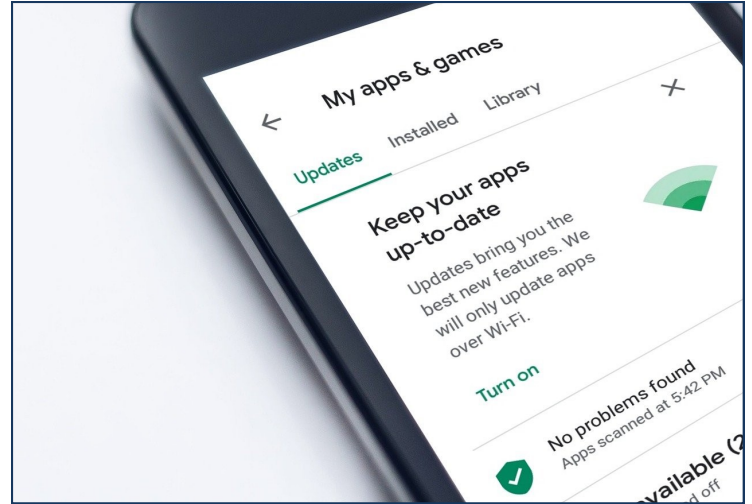
## Why Updates Matter

- **Security First:** Hackers love outdated software because it's easier to exploit. Updates patch those weaknesses.

- **Better Performance:** Updates fix bugs and can make your device faster and more reliable.

- **Cool New Features:** Ok, ok…it's hard to deny, sometimes those updates do come with new tools and fun extras to make life easier.

## Quick Tips to Stay Updated

- **Turn on Auto Updates:** Set it and forget it. Your device will handle it for you.

- **Don't Ignore the Critical Stuff:** If it says "security update," make it a priority.

- **Update Everything:** Phones, laptops, tablets, smartwatches–even your smart fridge needs some love.

- **Stick to Official Sources:** Only download updates from your device's app store or manufacturer.

## The Risks of Skipping Updates
Outdated devices are like unlocked doors for hackers. You could end up with stolen personal info, malware infections, or even ransomware demanding money to unlock your files. Not fun.

**More resources on software updates:** https://staysafeonline.org/resources/software-updates

# In the News

## Spotify abused to promote pirated software and game cheats

(Ax Sharma | November 19, 2024)

Spotify playlists and podcasts are being abused to push pirated software, game cheat codes, spam links, and "warez" sites.

By injecting targeted keywords and links in playlist names and podcast descriptions, threat actors may benefit from boosting SEO for their dubious online properties, since Spotify's web player results appear in search engines like Google.

### Spotify playlists pushing warez

When abusing platforms, spammers and scammers leave no stone unturned to promote their agenda.

Most recently, a Spotify playlist with the title "Sony Vegas Pro 13 Crack..." appeared to drive traffic to one or more "free" software sites listed in the playlist title and description.

Cybersecurity ethusiast Karol Paciorek who spotted the playlist said, "cybercriminals exploit Spotify for malware distribution. Why? Spotify has a strong reputation and its pages are easily indexed by search engines, making it an effective platform to promote malicious links."

The terms "warez" or "crack" are frequently used in the computing culture to refer to bootleg or pirated software circulating on the internet, often on untrustworthy websites.

Full Story: https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/spotify-abused-to-promote-pirated-software-and-game-cheats

## A Few More Cyber News Stories:

Malicious QR codes sent in the mail deliver malware
https://www.malwarebytes.com/blog/news/2024/11/malicious-qr-codes-sent-in-the-mail-deliver-malware

Surge in DocuSign Phishing Attacks Target US State Contractors
https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/docusign-phishing-targets-us-state

"Sad announcement" email implies your friend has died
https://www.malwarebytes.com/blog/news/2024/11/sad-announcement-email-leads-to-tech-support-scam

# Scams 'round the World

## This Month's Challenge

For this month's challenge, let's brush up on some of the things to look out for this holiday season!

Admittedly, I feel this may be a little too easy…but, 'tis the season of giving! Let's see all those perfect scores. No pressure! :)

You'll travel around the world to look at some common holiday scams, learn the cybercriminals' tricks, and then see if you can spot the threats!

Let me know how you do. Good luck!

https://training.knowbe4.com/modstore/view/9cc23e24-7b0c-4335-ba80-33e3ef974f2f/en-us



Holiday Cybersecurity World Passport Game