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## A school day like any other: 64,882 spams

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VINELAND -- The city's school district is getting slammed with spam.

It's so out of control that district technology supervisor Steve Dantine has appealed for legislative aid.

"It's annoying -- it's unsolicited," Dantine said. "It's like getting junk mail at home."

Think you have it bad hitting your delete button a couple of dozen times to delete unwanted Web correspondence? Dantine offered a snapshot of an average day at the district.

Picking a day at random, Dantine noted on Nov. 26 the school district's 3,000 accounts received 84,000 e-mails.

Of those, 64,882 were spam, Dantine said, adding that 269 of the messages contained potentially system-crippling viruses.

This spam jams the district's bandwidth and becomes a drag on the system, he said. Think of each e-mail as a boat in the Internet river, Dantine said. Too much traffic crowds the river.

Dantine maintains several firewalls, which keep questionable material from reaching students.

But some spam sneaks through to staffers. Dantine said he's aware of at least one employee who almost got stung by what looked like a bona fide request for personal data.

"I send out information to the staff to watch out for this stuff," he said.

But spammers are a savvy group.

"They put in what they know so it looks convincing," Dantine said. "They're very good -- they know your name."

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Some spammers attempt to glean personal information, which could be the gateway to identity theft.

As fast as spammers attempt to jump the firewalls, Dantine said, he tries to find ways to block them out.

Once spammers are identified, they get added to a list that blocks them from entering the district's system.

But there are innocents that get caught in the bad spam net.

"Stuff gets blocked that shouldn't. For instance, it sometimes blocks Rowan, I don't know why," Dantine said, referring to Rowan University in Glassboro.

The district needs help, Dantine said, appealing for the New Jersey Legislature's assistance.

"Let's do something," he said. " We complain, we whine -- we could email them."

Sen. Nicholas Asselta's representative said his office would be willing to review Dantine's request. Assemblyman Jeff Van Drew said he supports anti-spam legislation now pending in the General Assembly that would hike fines levied against convicted spammers.

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