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# Networks in Hawaii bog down with virus

## Internet providers field hundreds of calls from concerned residents

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By Rod Antone  
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The latest global e-mail "worm" hit Hawaii Internet users fast and hard, local information technology experts said yesterday.

Some computer users were getting hundreds of e-mails infected with the worm each minute, said information technology executive Ho'Ala Greevy.

"A subscriber could have anywhere between one to 900 mailboxes ... it's been nonstop since yesterday (Monday) afternoon," said Ho'Ala Greevy, president of Pau Spam LLC. "We'll probably see it continue through the week."

Called "Mydoom" or "Novarg," the worm infects messages and poses as a legitimate computer error message. It has successfully tricked e-mail recipients into spreading it to friends, co-workers and business associates.

Oceanic Time Warner Cable officials said they have received hundreds of calls since Monday from their Road Runner cable Internet subscribers who were trying to

determine if they should open up their mail or not.

"People would call us and ask, 'Did you send me an e-mail?'" said Kiman Wong, general manager for Oceanic's Internet services. "The viruses coming out right now makes it look like an e-mail is from Road Runner."

MessageLabs Inc. of New York, which scans e-mail for viruses, said one in every 12 messages globally contained the worm. Security experts described it as the largest outbreak in months.

"It's the trust factor you are exploiting," said Oliver Friedrichs, senior research manager with anti-virus vendor Symantec Corp. "Most people, when they receive something, they want to trust it. You don't want to miss something people may be sending you."

Earl Ford, president and CEO of SystemMetrics in Hawaii said commercial businesses such as insurance and real estate companies seemed to be the hardest hit, mainly because many of their e-mail addresses were published on the Internet.

However Ford said the Star-Bulletin network was among the worst hit locally, with some individual mailboxes receiving as many as 1,200 virus messages within 24 hours.

"From midnight (yesterday) to 3 p.m. our filtering system blocked out 23,835 infected e-mails," Ford said. "About 58 percent of the message traffic was viruses ... this is by far the biggest number of attacks we've seen."

Upon activation -- usually when a recipient clicks on an e-mail attachment -- the rogue program searches through address books and sends itself to e-mail addresses it finds. It chooses one as the sender, so recipients may believe the message comes from someone known.

Unlike other mass-mailing worms, Mydoom does not attempt to trick victims by promising nude pictures of celebrities or mimicking personal notes. Rather, messages carry innocuous-sounding subject lines, like "Error" or "Server Report" and messages in the body such as "Mail transaction failed. Partial message is available."

Mydoom infects computers that run Microsoft Corp.'s Windows operating systems, though other computers were affected by network slowdowns and a flood of bogus messages.

Some corporate networks were clogged with infected traffic within hours of its appearance Monday, and operators of many systems voluntarily shut down their e-mail to keep the worm from spreading during the cleanup.

Besides sending out tainted e-mail, the program appears to open up a backdoor so

hackers can take over the computer later. The worm also tries to spread through the Kazaa file-sharing network and was programmed to try to overwhelm the Web site of The SCO Group Inc. beginning Sunday by repeatedly sending fake requests.

SCO's site has been targeted before because of its threats to sue users of the Linux operating system in an intellectual property dispute, and spokesman Blake Stowell said the site was unavailable at times yesterday, apparently because of infected computers set to the wrong date.

SCO announced a \$250,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of Mydoom's creator.

"This is basically a soap opera," said James Kerr founder and CEO of SuperGeeks in Honolulu. "A high-tech soap opera which is playing itself out as we speak."

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The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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