



The county's computer system was involved in a cyber attack Sunday, May 19 but fast action by experts kept the internal online system safe. (The Enterprise/FILE)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Malheur County dodges online breach attempt

by By Pat Caldwell - The Enterprise — on May 29, 2024

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**By Pat
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Author

VALE – Malheur County dodged serious trouble last weekend when experts thwarted an attempt to breach online data.

Joshua Kreger, county director of information services, said the attempt to break into the county’s computer system was detected early Sunday, May 19.

“The IT department was able to secure the network within 20 minutes,” said Kreger.

Kreger said Ty Hemeon, county information service coordinator, notified him of the attempted break-in at 9 a.m. The two then rushed to the courthouse.

“We looked at the system, saw something that was not right and shut everything down,” said Kreger.

Kreger said he then contacted Progent, a cyber security company.

“Then we started to go through the network and cleaned everything out,” said Kreger.

The county did not lose any data, said Kreger, and the election on Tuesday, May 22, wasn’t impacted. However, the county’s email system was disrupted. Kreger said he and his team worked nearly around-the-

clock during the week to check every part of the county's computer system.

“The sheriff's office and dispatch emergency lines never went down. Computer systems were up by Sunday evening. We had email back fully by mid-week. We are now at a point where the county systems are online and good and we are secure,” said Kreger.

Kreger said Progent is investigating the attempted computer system break-in.

He said he can't release some information about the incident until the investigation is complete.

The county computer system is protected by anti-virus software, including Homeland Security apparatus and firewalls, Kreger said.

Kreger said the response by county employees to the online raid was crucial.

“I've always told people if you feel something is not right or even partially wrong, give me a call any time. County employees followed the words I said,” said Kreger.

While Kreger would not speculate on the motivation of the hackers, he said usually

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such attacks aim “to make a dollar.”

“They are looking for anything that can be turned into monetary value,” he said.

Kreger said such attack can be devastating to a computer system and costly.

In 2020, Tillamook County paid a \$300,000 ransom to reclaim data access to its computer system after a cyberattack.

“This could have gone so much more badly,” he said.

Kreger said the county is also working with Progent to beef up online security.

News tip? Contact reporter Pat Caldwell at pat@malheurenterprise.com

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By Pat Caldwell - The Enterprise

Pat Caldwell is a reporter for the Malheur Enterprise and a veteran Oregon journalist.

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