

## How Will Coronavirus Impact Cybersecurity and Why Does it Matter?

As the coronavirus pandemic has descended on the world, it has affected people's lives in many unexpected ways. Stay-at-home orders and social-distancing guidelines have led to fundamental changes in the way business is being conducted, with many individuals forced to telecommute for the first time in their careers.

Throughout personal and professional lives, more interaction has moved to web-based services, including e-commerce, communication, and information resources. Unfortunately, many companies are underprepared for the sudden reliance on remote access technologies, potentially opening the door to cyber criminals. While cyber liability insurance is one part of a more comprehensive risk management program for business interests, it is critical that insurance agents help their clients understand emerging cyber risk exposures created in the wake of the coronavirus.

### Increased Online Activity Leads to an Increase in Cyber Risks

When the coronavirus and its related disease COVID-19 first began to spread in the United States in the early part of 2020, it immediately began to affect how we interact with the world around us. Businesses began to shutter their operations or moved to online environments. Schools also began to close, shifting students to virtual classrooms accessed from home. As stores closed and certain consumer goods began to be difficult to obtain in person, a significant uptick in e-commerce was experienced. These factors created unprecedented strains on computer networks and magnified the challenges cybersecurity professionals face on a daily basis, such as a sharp climb in cyber attacks.

### Network Vulnerabilities: Both Human and Technological Factors

With fundamental shifts in the way business and social interaction is being conducted—moving to online virtual environments—cyber risk exposures have increased dramatically. In simple terms, cyber criminals have ramped up their attacks and are attempting to access networks across industries and into the public sector.

Insurance agents should address the current pandemic as an opportunity to share information on cyber insurance coverage options with their clients, especially due to the growing potential of reportable cyber incidents.

### Helping Manage Client Cyber Risks: Tips for Insurance Agents

Cyber liability insurance is designed to protect against expenses associated with online fraud and criminality, but network administrators and business owners need to take steps to protect sensitive information from unlawful conduct. COVID-19 has certainly changed the way business and education is being conducted, potentially opening the door for cyber criminals to take full advantage of.

Insurance agents play an important role in cyber liability insurance protection, particularly in risk management practices. The coronavirus pandemic's economic and human costs will be felt for years to come, but now is the time to take the steps needed to protect business systems from the possibility of cyber criminality. Tips for agents include:

- Encouraging clients to review both their current cyber liability insurance coverages as well as any gaps in coverage that may need to be filled.
- Sharing online risk management resources where available, especially those that address remote working/telecommuting exposures.
- Point out the limitations of existing cyber coverage. Some policies may have exclusions for remote working, and while many property and casualty policies offer limited coverage for this exposure, dedicated cyber liability policies represent a superior form of coverage.
- Sharing information on filing cyber claims. The sooner an incident is reported, the quicker that breach response resources can be applied to protect business assets from loss. The expertise provided by insurance agents and specialty insurance carriers are key benefits of a quality cyber liability policy.

If a client does not have specialty cyber coverage, now is a good time to apply. Most specialty cyber insurance carriers are ready and willing to provide outstanding protection for their business clients, even in the wake of the challenges presented by the global coronavirus pandemic.

## Summary

With these cybersecurity practices, and with the robust coverage of cyber liability insurance, business owners and public agencies alike can protect user data. As COVID-19 continues to shape online activity, cybersecurity remains a serious concern. Taking the steps to protect users and critical business data during and after the pandemic is of paramount importance.

## Sources

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