

CYBER SECURITY IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY – IS YOUR ORGANIZATION PREPARED?

Audie McCarthy, President and CEO of Mohawk College Enterprise

Sixty-six per cent of organizations with 250 to 499 employees experienced a cyber attack in 2018, according to Canadian Internet Registration Authority.

Municipalities are not immune. Eight days after a cyber attack hit Stratford, the city was still working to restore systems. For four hours on a Sunday morning in February 2018, visitors to the City of Cambridge website had their browsers covertly hijacked.

Yet, even with stories like these regularly making headlines, many organizations are not preparing themselves for such incidents. In fact, a 2018 Marsh & McLennan global survey found that only 30 per cent of respondents had a plan in place to handle a cyber-attack.

While these concerns may appear to be the domain of an organization's IT department, cyber security is everyone's responsibility. Trusted relationships between municipalities and their citizens, suppliers and service providers are under threat at any entry point. Even for employees whose roles are totally unrelated to IT or who have no personal interest or aptitude in technology, it is critical to have a basic understanding of the risks and what steps to take to increase security.

Each employee needs to understand how small actions can affect an entire organization's security. For example, if a person clicks on an infected link, it could compromise an entire network. Organizations need sound strategies and to show employees how they can contribute to cybersecurity, with actions as small as locking devices when unattended or knowing how to recognize a phishing email. Once employees learn the importance and train in these strategies, training must be ongoing and repeated.

"When a cyber event happens, it involves everyone in the organization. For example, if a retail company's payment terminals get taken over, it affects the frontline customer service, executives, the CEO and board of directors and media relations," said Tracey Dallaire, senior director technology academic at Mohawk College. "Everyone should have a level of literacy in cyber security."

Mohawk College's Cyber Security Testing Lab provides hands-on, experiential learning for students to learn through simulated hack events how to triage skills to set priorities, forensic skills to figure out what went wrong in a cyber attack and the skills to communicate with stakeholders in a crisis. The lab is also used for customized training of industry and community organizations.

"Municipalities are vulnerable as they have rich information about citizens and they run essential services. It is important to be able to respond and be resilient. It is helpful to go through scenarios in a safe environment to be better prepared and have a better understanding of the risks," said Dallaire.

"We have training for technical and non-technical professionals. As part of Mohawk College, Mohawk College Enterprise has use of this facility and can create customized training for any team. Simulations take them through what a situation would be like to understand the language used in this area, the decisions an organization is confronted with when an event unfolds and how to position themselves for quick decision-making."



Mohawk College Enterprise is a business-to-business corporation established by Mohawk College to prepare people and companies with the skills and expertise required to succeed in today's fast-paced world. Through our expert trainers, we provide training and customized solutions with the latest techniques and technology.

Teaching performance management principles is part of our Future Ready Leadership Program, a series of customized leadership training sessions held one day each month, over eight months. This highly sought after program will help develop emerging leaders and provides; critical thinking skills and valuable insight that will prepare and address organizational change management. Audie McCarthy is president and CEO of MCE. For information, please contact Audie at 905-575-2525 or amccarthy@mcecor.com.