

What is Ransomware? How do I protect against Ransomware?

by Roger Bergstein
Stuart Computer Service
June 18, 2016

Ransomware is a particularly vicious type of computer malware that can infect your computer. Some strains of ransomware will lock your computer with a display screen indicating that your computer has been targeted by law enforcement. Other strains will go further and encrypt your data. In all cases, Ransomware demands that you pay the perpetrator a ransom to release your computer or decrypt your data. The ransom is demanded in the Bitcoin cryptocurrency which is virtually untraceable.

What should a victim or ransomware do? NEVER pay the ransom; if you do, you are paying criminals, and you have no guarantee that the payment will unlock the computer.

The lock screens can be removed by computer professionals. The real problem occurs if your data has been encrypted. In some cases it is possible to recover your data from other locations on your computer, or from your backups. In the worst scenario, if your backup is a cloud backup, or a constantly connected backup device, the backup may be encrypted as well.

Prevention and preparedness is the best cure for ransomware. Be prepared by backing up your data on a regular basis, and remove the backup device from the computer once the backup has completed. The authors of the heinous type of software are very smart and are able to bypass resident antivirus programs. So be vigilant: don't click on links in strange emails; don't open that unpaid invoice attached to an email from someone you never heard of; don't download and install free programs unless you are sure they are not infected; and if you notice any strange activity on your computer, pull the plug and have the computer serviced.