

Malware Attack Threatens to Kick Users Offline

By Cadie Thompson | CNBC

A malware attack that has infected some computers for more than a year may cause tens of thousands of Americans to lose their Internet connection on Monday.

The only way for users to prevent losing their Internet connection is to do a quick check for malware on their computer. One way to do this is to visit a website the FBI set up for users to determine if their computers are infected. The site also walks users through what steps to take if their computer is infected.

Hackers are to blame for the malware attack, which was part of an international online advertising scam that resulted in more than 570,000 infected computers around the world. The malicious software disabled users' antivirus software, which could also make their computer prone to other issues.

The FBI caught the hackers last year, but the agents soon discovered they could not simply turn off the servers being used to control the computers, because victims of the attack would lose their ability to go online. In an unprecedented move, the FBI brought in a private company to set up clean servers to support the victims of the attack.

However, it is a temporary fix and the safety net system will be shut down at 12:01 EDT Monday, July 9.

There have been repeated warnings issued to the public about the attack from Internet service providers and internet companies, including Facebook (FB) and Google (GOOG), which both issued warning messages on their sites if the companies detected that a user's computer might be infected.

Despite these warnings, the FBI estimates that there are still more than 277,000 computers infected worldwide and about 64,000 in the United States.

"I think they'll watch, wait and see what the U.S. economy really does in the summer months," he predicts, starting with tomorrow's payroll report, which will either extend a weak trend or break it.