Why Secure Networks?

Network security is crucial to protect against attacks from malicious hackers, which can occur through malware, spoofing, packet sniffing, or disruptive methods like packet flooding. These attacks pose significant risks to organizations, including:

1. Leakage of Sensitive Information:  
   Attacks can compromise confidential data, resulting in severe repercussions.
2. Damage to Reputation:  
   Breaches harm an organization’s image, affecting customer trust and retention.
3. Financial and Operational Impact:  
   Mitigating attacks costs time and money, hindering overall efficiency.

Example of a Cyberattack:

In 2014, hackers infiltrated Home Depot servers with malware, compromising credit and debit card information for over 56 million customers. The incident highlights the catastrophic impact of network security failures.

To secure networks effectively, understanding various types of cyberattacks is essential. The next section will delve into common network threats and how to mitigate them.

# How intrusions compromise your system

In this section of the course, you learned that every network has inherent vulnerabilities and could become the target of a network attack.

Attackers could have varying motivations for attacking your organization’s network. They may have financial, personal, or political motivations, or they may be a disgruntled employee or an activist who disagrees with the company's values and wants to harm an organization’s operations. Malicious actors can target any network. Security analysts must be constantly alert to potential vulnerabilities in their organization’s network and take quick action to mitigate them.

In this reading, you’ll learn about network interception attacks and backdoor attacks, and the possible impacts these attacks could have on an organization.

## Network interception attacks

Network interception attacks work by intercepting network traffic and stealing valuable information or interfering with the transmission in some way.

Malicious actors can use hardware or software tools to capture and inspect data in transit. This is referred to as **packet sniffing**. In addition to seeing information that they are not entitled to, malicious actors can also intercept network traffic and alter it. These attacks can cause damage to an organization’s network by inserting malicious code modifications or altering the message and interrupting network operations. For example, an attacker can intercept a bank transfer and change the account receiving the funds to one that the attacker controls.

Later in this course you will learn more about malicious packet sniffing, and other types of network interception attacks: on-path attacks and replay attacks.

## Backdoor attacks

A **backdoor attack** is another type of attack you will need to be aware of as a security analyst. An organization may have a lot of security measures in place, including cameras, biometric scans and access codes to keep employees from entering and exiting without being seen. However, an employee might work around the security measures by finding a backdoor to the building that is not as heavily monitored, allowing them to sneak out for the afternoon without being seen.

In cybersecurity, backdoors are weaknesses intentionally left by programmers or system and network administrators that bypass normal access control mechanisms. Backdoors are intended to help programmers conduct troubleshooting or administrative tasks. However, backdoors can also be installed by attackers after they’ve compromised an organization to ensure they have persistent access.

Once the hacker has entered an insecure network through a backdoor, they can cause extensive damage: installing malware, performing a denial of service (DoS) attack, stealing private information or changing other security settings that leaves the system vulnerable to other attacks. A **DoS attack** is an attack that targets a network or server and floods it with network traffic.

## Possible impacts on an organization

As you’ve learned already, network attacks can have a significant negative impact on an organization. Let’s examine some potential consequences.

* **Financial**: When a system is taken offline with a DoS attack or some other tactic, they prevent a company from performing tasks that generate revenue. Depending on the size of an organization, interrupted operations can cost millions of dollars. Reparation costs to rebuild software infrastructure and to pay large sums associated with potential ransomware can be financially difficult. In addition, if a malicious actor gets access to the personal information of the company’s clients or customers, the company may face heavy litigation and settlement costs if customers seek legal recourse.
* **Reputation**: Attacks can also have a negative impact on the reputation of an organization. If it becomes public knowledge that a company has experienced a cyber attack, the public may become concerned about the security practices of the organization. They may stop trusting the company with their personal information and choose a competitor to fulfill their needs.
* **Public safety**: If an attack occurs on a government network, this can potentially impact the safety and welfare of the citizens of a country. In recent years, defense agencies across the globe are investing heavily in combating cyber warfare tactics. If a malicious actor gained access to a power grid, a public water system, or even a military defense communication system, the public could face physical harm due to a network intrusion attack.

## Key takeaways

Malicious actors are constantly looking for ways to exploit systems. They learn about new vulnerabilities as they arise and attempt to exploit every vulnerability in a system. Attackers leverage backdoor attack methods and network interception attacks to gain access to sensitive information they can use to exploit an organization or cause serious damage. These types of attacks can impact an organization financially, damage its reputation, and potentially put the public in danger.  It is important that security analysts stay educated in order to maintain network safety and reduce the likelihood and impact of these types of attacks. Securing networks has never been more important.

The Role of an Incident Responder

In cybersecurity, incident responders face high-pressure situations when managing security breaches. Initial reactions often include a sense of panic and urgent questions: *What has happened? What needs to be done? How long will this take?*

To handle such crises effectively, incident responders rely on the 3 Cs:

1. Command:
   * Someone must take charge, leading the team with clear direction.
2. Control:
   * Ensuring all team members are aligned and focused on the mission.
3. Communication:
   * The most critical element. Team members must communicate their observations and suggestions to help resolve the incident efficiently.

Example: Instead of acting independently, responders should share insights like, *"I think we should analyze this area to gather more data."*

Advice for Aspiring Cybersecurity Professionals

If you are passionate, curious, and driven to build secure systems, you belong in cybersecurity. The industry values people who ask questions, seek to improve technology, and care about protecting users. Enthusiastic learners who are dedicated to problem-solving and security are always welcome in this field.