



## Experts say Bush family fell victim to common hacking technique

By: Alison Sullivan – February 9, 2013

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To top internet security experts, the technique a recent hacker used to gain access to Bush family's email accounts is nothing alarming or unique.

“It's not a remarkable hack job,” said Jim Harper, the director of information policy studies at the libertarian CATO Institute. “It's a notable incident because it does affect a notable family and notable people.”

Recently, someone gained access to emails and other account information of former President George H.W. Bush and his family. Email exchanges between family members, pictures, and private information including addresses and even key codes are some of the information that was obtained. Federal officials are currently undergoing an investigation the breach.

Harper said despite the fact a high-profile family was hacked, the method used to obtain the family's information is fairly common; obtaining the log-in information of a family member and using it to connect to other accounts. “This isn't a hacker to worry about as far as his technical skills,” he said.

Though the hacker obtained information from over a span of three years — between 2009 to 2012 — Ravi Sandhu, professor of cyber security at the University of Texas at San Antonio, said there are many possibilities to what information the hacker may still possess.

“It is quite possible that he's holding information that has not yet been released, because the information that's been released is not really damaging to the family's reputation. And he might be doing blackmail or keeping it as a tool to be used sometime later,” Sandhu said, adding it's possible the hacker could have obtained the information for someone else.

In 2011, the United States had more than 300,000 internet crime complaints were documented that ranged from money fraud, scams, and identity theft, according to a 2011 Internet Crime Report from the Internet Crime Complaint Center. More than 18,400 of the complaints were reported from Texas.

But Doug Jacobson, an Iowa State University professor of electrical and computer engineering, said many instances of crime go unreported because people just change their password.

Jacobson's research includes providing people with better literacy on protecting themselves on the internet, to better understand the ramifications of creating easy passwords or accessing the internet in a public coffee shop. He said people think they aren't important enough to worry about making sure their information is secure, so people create passwords that a hacker can easily guess.

"I think part of it is we've grown accustomed to the internet," Jacobson said. "For a lot of people it's just, 'I don't have anything that anyone would want...I'm not a target'. Some of those things lead to this complacency; 'no one will come after me'."

Though regrettable the Bush family's private information was leaked, Jacobson said he hopes more people use the incident to make their information more secure.

"If your password is the name of your dog or cat, you should probably look into changing it," he said.