SPAM

SPAM (unsolicited unwanted emails) has become an increasing problem for OCFS staff. During 2004, there were 1,868,861 viruses deleted, 2,018,092 spam emails tagged and 3,319,378 spam emails refused. The following steps have been taken over the past year to reduce the amount of spam received, and to provide assistance if spam gets through, or emails are identified as spam that are legitimate email

Determination of Spam:

All emails coming in from outside the system are examined to determine the likelihood that they are Spam. Each email is looked at to see if it was constructed in such a manner that it had some of the characteristics that spam normally has. The McAfee appliances that scan email that originate from outside our environment have a series of some 500 rules that the email is subjected to. Based upon the rules that are triggered, a final spam score is assigned to the email and action taken based on that score.

Over the past year, emails have been identified as High, Medium or Low likelihood of being Spam, depending on the final "spam" score assigned to it, which is based upon the rules that were triggered.

If the email is tagged as a "High" or "Medium" likelihood of being Spam, it is refused. If it is tagged as a "Low" spam probability category, it will be tagged with "[spam]" in the Subject Line, and it will be left up to the recipient to determine if it is Spam or not.

Examples of the rules that can be triggered (and associated scores) are:
* 3.4 -- HTML has unbalanced body tags
* 3.1 -- Message is 30% to 40% HTML
* 1.1 -- HTML-only message, but there is no HTML
* 1.1 -- Message only has text/html MIME parts
* -0.5 -- HTML font face is not a commonly used
* -0.4 -- HTML has a big font
* 0.1 -- Quoted-printable line longer than 76
* 0.1 -- HTML included in message
* 0.0 -- HTML has unbalanced html tags

If email is received that is Spam and not marked as such:

OFT maintains a Spamhelp mailbox that is constantly monitored by OFT staff; the address is SpamHelp.

The following is similar to the message that you will get if you send an email to spamhelp; it explains the best way to send emails to be reviewed.

The best way for you to assist us with untagged spam messages is to forward them to this mailbox for analysis by us (as you may have just done). Our spam filters won't ever catch all of the unwanted email that enters our system–spammers are constantly shifting tactics to try to get by our filters–but we are doing all we can to prevent spam email messages from getting to you.

Please note, *you don't need to forward spam messages already marked with the [Spam] or [spam] designation in the Subject line*. These are marked as such for easy identification by you. Most spam messages are deleted before ever getting to you, but, those which are deemed debatable by our anti-spam rules are delivered to you for final review.

If you receive actual spam email messages **NOT** marked as [Spam] or [spam], please continue to send them to SpamHelp. In order to do this:

- Create a new mail item
- Address it to the SpamHelp mailbox listed above
- Drag and drop the unmarked spam messages into the new mail item

When done properly, the new mail item will have an envelope icon within either the attachment or body section of the email for each attached message that you want to send.

If email is received and marked as Spam and it is not Spam:

For falsely marked messages, incorrectly marked as spam, which are not spam, please submit the original email message using the same method as above:

- Create a new mail item
- Address it to the SpamHelp mailbox listed above
- Drag and drop the message incorrectly marked as spam into the new mail item
- Add a note that the message was marked as spam and is not spam.

If a particular address is identified as Spam, and it is not, an Allow Sender entry can be added to the HSEN and NYSEmail McAfee appliances. This will not subject any mail from that source to spam scanning.

Lastly, to prevent future spam problems, do not publish your email address on websites or mailing lists that cannot ensure your privacy.

If you have further questions regarding Spam and how it is addressed, please contact the Spamhelp mailbox or send an email to the OCFS Information Security Officer at Jo.Shrader@dfa.state.ny.us.