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Weak passwords no longer permitted

Convenience opens the door to spammers

We've all encountered security setups where the password is required to be a minimum length, usually six or more characters, and also a mix of letters and numbers. Many people consider this a hassle, since those kinds of passwords can be harder to remember.

At OCS we've always promoted the use of email passwords that are hard to guess. When customers call for whatever reason, we have an automated system that alerts us if they're on our "weak password" list, and we encourage them to change it. When time permits we sometimes phone these customers and explain the situation.

This list currently includes around a hundred customers, and it recently became clear that time has finally run out to manage this on an individual or voluntary basis. Why? Because spammers have started using more sophisticated methods to scan the Internet in search of email addresses with weak passwords, which they can then exploit.

Here's how this commonly happens. While the computers of OCS subscribers are relatively free of viruses, those of the global public at large are not. Many are infected with viruses that scan for email addresses and then use them to send spam masqueraded as the owner of that computer.

We recently discovered a new trick they're up to. They retrieve all of these email addresses, and then use automated scripts to test each one for access options at its home domain via webmail, trying easy-to-guess passwords. If they succeed, they then hijack that address and use it to broadcast spam.

The first major problem this causes is probably obvious. The unsuspecting owner of the address starts receiving all kinds of nasty notes demanding that they stop sending spam! That can certainly be a huge inconvenience for the unfortunate individual, but there's even more to it.

Virtually all responsible ISP email services, including OCS, will block incoming email that is obviously spam. But unlike OCS, some do not bother to identify only the alleged perpetrator and they block mail from the entire domain. Therefore, if for example only one or two addresses at OCS have been hijacked in this manner, all mail from any address at any domain assigned to our mail servers will be blocked as a domain that permits spam.

This happened briefly, earlier this week. Four addresses with weak passwords were successfully guessed, and then used via webmail to broadcast spam. We have all of the resulting blocks at other ISPs lifted, and the affected addresses on our system have changed their passwords.

In view of this new attack and because of its potential to affect everyone,

we've had no choice but to accelerate our normal voluntary process of changing weak passwords. We've therefore modified the email password for all accounts which were considered vulnerable, and we'll no longer be able to allow new accounts to select a weak password.

A weak password is one that's probably easy to remember, but also very easy to guess. The most common examples include using the word "password" as the password, or the same name as the address – like "john@somedomain.com" with "john" as the password.

If you've been using a weak password, you may find that you can't access your email. We're attempting to contact as many of these customers as possible, but that often involves leaving voice mail messages and can take some time. So if you're having a problem like this, just phone our office and we'll be happy to assist you. You'll be able to either use the new and more secure password we've assigned to your account, or you can set it to something else if you wish as long as it meets the new "hard to guess" requirement.



The OCS home page passed 10 million hits in March 2007 – that's a great audience for local advertisers!

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Our Exeter tower also covers Badger Hill!

- VIRUSES STOPPED BY OCS SYSTEM: 1,286,188 (Sept 2007: 442)
- SPAM BLOCKED BY OCS SYSTEM: 97,041,792 (Sept 2007: 5,755,266)

OFFICE HOURS • MON-FRI 8AM-8PM • SAT 9AM-5PM • CLOSED SUN
767 NORTH PORTER ROAD • PORTERVILLE CA 93257 • 559-781-4123

Richgrove computer lab opens

Completes deployment of grant project



District Supervisor Connie Conway officially "cut the ribbon" on Richgrove's new community computer lab in a ceremony on September 14, 2007.

The lab completes the deployment of a USDA/RUS grant project awarded to OCS in September 2003. OCS worked closely with the Richgrove Utility Services District to implement construction of the new lab, installation of 28 networked Vista computers, and the provisioning of high-speed wireless service to the lab and to the community of Richgrove.

Two years of free service will now be provided to the lab, and normal OCS service plans will be made available to local residents and businesses. Given that no broadband of any kind was previously



available in Richgrove, this new service brings a significant new advantage to the small rural community!



Help us celebrate! OCS turned 25 in February, the company was started in a home office in 1982. We've had our 25-year logo printed on a selection of glassware as gifts for our customers, please stop by the office and choose yours! We have mugs in three colors, tall mixing (pint) glasses, and etched wine glasses. While they last, limit two per customer!

VoIP companies in trouble

Third largest VoIP service provider SunRocket declared a surprise bankruptcy in July, then closed operations in August. Now, Vonage has been handed a huge defeat in rulings on patent infringement brought first by Sprint and then Verizon. Its stock is trading at less than a dollar, after an IPO at \$17 just over a year ago.

So what's happening? Is VoIP going bust, or succumbing only to the traditional big players? Not at all, VoIP is one of the most significant new services available over the Internet and it's here to stay.

Without regard to the Vonage case (which they will appeal again), that company and others like it were a mile wide and an inch deep. VoIP was their only product, much of that was outsourced, and they were selling service below their cost in order to gain customers.

In stark contrast, OCS has depth in our wide range of services, our pricing is fair but not designed to undercut the company, and our open source technology is not vulnerable to lawsuits. Call us for more information!

Stuck in a contract?

Show us your binding paperwork and we may waive up to \$100 from your OCS startup costs...



Fan Mail "OCS has fabulous service!" -F/MH

"Your service is so fast. I can't believe I spent two years with [another local wireless service]!" -KS

"OCS is the best service I've ever had." -FH

I Didn't Know That!

OCS provides "A-to-Z" computer technology services:

- Complete computer service and repair shop
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- Professional programming and custom application development
- eCommerce and business groupware solutions
- Computer and Internet technology consulting
- Secure branch office inter-networking
- Internet-based "VOIP" telephone services
- iSuite of online utility applications

OACYS INTERNET SERVICE PLANS

One-Time Fees

Plan Name	Average Speeds			B-M-W ¹	One-Time Fees			Monthly Service
	Min	Typ	Max		Service Activation	Install/Configure	Equipment Deposit	
1 Bandwidth-Mailboxes-Webpace (see notes)								
DIALUP	26K	40K	53K	1-5-5	25.00	-	-	24.95
Accelerator	Typically 2-5X faster			-	-	-	-	+5.00
WIRELESS STANDARD 2.4 GHz								
24 Basic	125K	500K	750K	10-5-5	25.00	100.00	100.00	49.95 ^{2,3}
24 Premium	250K	1M	1.5M	15-5-5	25.00	100.00	100.00	79.95 ^{2,3}
24 Business	375K	1.5M	2M	20-10-10	25.00	100.00	100.00	129.95 ^{2,3}
WIRELESS SPECIAL CASES 900 MHz (where available)								
900 Basic	125K	375K	750K	5-5-5	25.00	100.00	100.00	59.95 ^{4,5}
WIRELESS MISSION CRITICAL 5.8 GHz (where available)								
58 Premium	250K	1M	1.5M	15-5-5	25.00	100.00	100.00	99.95
58 Business	375K	1.5M	2M	20-10-10	25.00	100.00	100.00	129.95
58 Professional	500K	2M	3M	25-25-25	25.00	100.00	100.00	159.95
58 Corporate	750K	3M	4M	30-30-30	25.00	100.00	100.00	199.95
58 Enterprise	1M	4M	5M	40-40-40	25.00	100.00	100.00	249.95

All plans include automated central email virus scanning, email spam filtering, and website parental controls. Some plan types permit webpace for personal use only. Wireless installation and deposit package may be paid in installments upon request. All speeds are symmetrical (same for upload and download) within the OACYS network only. All plans terminate at OACYS Porterville headquarters and transport to the Internet via dual T3s over dedicated OC12 fiber optic circuit. All plans subject to change without notice. Pricing and terms are current at the date of this newsletter and supersede previous versions. For footnotes 2,3,4,5 surcharges may apply. Please check with our office for additional details.

To set Account Preferences or make Payments Online, click **UserAdmin** on our website

On the road? Call our toll-free support at 888-OACYS.COM