How to Test and Improve the Security of Your Computer Network

As the daily continuing assaults on your computer network mount, there is some good news. There is a source where you can get a number of programs for free that will help you maintain your system and its security. Even better, you do not have to be a computer expert to get the benefits the programs offer.

There is always a challenge when one discusses computer programs that touch on security. Like any other tool, the outcome of the use of computer security tools depends on the ethics and morals of the persons who use them. The tools computer forensics experts use in the recovery of data from hard disks are the same tools that may be used to encrypt or destroy data. (That is why forensics experts use mirror images or backup copies of data collections at issue.)

The good news is that your search for competent (and free) security tools that are easy and safe to use may include the Gibson Research Corporation's web site at http://www.grc.com. When you click on Free Stuff hypertext link, you have access to download or use the following helpful tools:

LeakTest is an automatic firewall-leak tester that will hack into your system in less than a minute and will deliver a detailed report on how it was able to get in. The report will give you a list of vulnerabilities that you might consider working to change. Remember, the hack is not done by a human, but by a computer. It can be a humbling (and a learning) experience.

Shoot the Messenger is a special type of pop-up stopper for Microsoft Windows NT, 2000, and XP. These operating systems have a hidden server, called Windows Messenger, that most people do not know about, and therefore, never turn off. When Windows Messenger is on, you can receive unsolicited advertising and other material. The program stops this frustration.

DCOMbobulator is a program for Microsoft Windows 98 and later operating systems that disables the Distributed Component Object Model (DCOM). DCOM is not used often, but its presence creates system vulnerabilities. The DCOMbobulator checks on how effective the security patches are and increases the security level of your system by disabling DCOM.

UnPlug n Pray is a program that takes care of a vulnerability in the Universal Plug and Play feature in Microsoft Windows XP and ME that allows hackers to take over your system. It allows you to turn Plug and Play on or off at will.

XPdite is a small solution to a problem Microsoft solved for Windows XP with a 50 to 140 megabyte service pack (Service Pack 1). The problem was that, without the service pack or XPdite, a hacker can delete any file in any directory on your computer at will.

ID Serve tells you what kind of server web sites are using so that you can evaluate which ones are secure and which are not. That way, you know whether you should share your confidential information on that site or not.

SocketLock allows you to close openings that Microsoft XP leaves open. These open sockets, when not used for other applications like printing or online communications, are vulnerabilities that hackers use to take control of your system.