

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Security Alert: Sinclair Hit by Ransomware Attack

Sinclair is the latest broadcaster to fall victim to a ransomware attack. On Monday, the company revealed it identified and began investigating a potential security incident on Saturday. By Sunday, Sinclair found certain servers and workstations in its environment were encrypted with ransomware, and data was taken from the company's network. Work is still being done to determine what information the data contained, and Sinclair is determining how it will move forward based on what was breached.

“A cybersecurity firm that has assisted other companies in similar circumstances was engaged, and law enforcement and other governmental agencies were notified,” Sinclair said in a statement. “We are working diligently to address the incident and to restore operations quickly and securely. As we work to complete the investigation, we will look for opportunities to enhance our existing security measures.” The attack did cause and may continue to cause disruption to certain aspects of the company's business, including the provisioning of local advertisements by its broadcast stations to customers. Employees were unable to access the company's VPN or their email accounts Monday as the investigation into the threat continued.

National Cybersecurity Alliance Interim Executive Director *Lisa Plaggemier* told **CFX** that the fact that Sinclair's central systems do not appear to be compromised is a positive sign. “That said, many of their affiliates have been affected, and given how expansive Sinclair is this will likely mean a long

remediation period,” she said.

Every ransomware attack is different, and Plaggemier said remediating certain breaches can be a very long process, particularly if organizations choose not to pay the requested ransom. That would mean impacted systems would need to be rebuilt from scratch. At **SCTE's** Cable-Tec Expo last week, *Nancy Davoust*, **Comcast** VP II of Security Architecture, Identity and Access, said that doesn't mean paying the hacker is the right answer either. There's no guarantee that you're going to get your data back or your systems working optimally again, she argued, and if intellectual property is involved, there's still a chance they could ransom the same victim again.

For those exact reasons, Plaggemier believes the quickest path for returning to normalcy for any victim is to have the training, awareness and tools in place that help prevent these breaches in the first place.

Cybersecurity attacks, particularly those of the ransomware variety, have been rising in frequency at an alarming rate. In 2021, statistics show that a ransomware attack is occurring every 11 seconds with an estimated cost of approximately \$20 million globally. As for why the media industry and other public-facing sectors have become larger targets recently, it all comes down to the money.

“Cybercriminals are known for targeting organizations that will give them the opportunity to both receive heavy payouts and notoriety,” Plaggemier said. “Furthermore, as ransomware and cybercriminals become more sophisticated, it is easier



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and easier for them to execute effective attacks.”

With a plethora of organizations and employees embracing a hybrid or fully work-from-home model in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, cybersecurity as a whole has become more complicated. But simple, old-school techniques like complex passwords and multi-factor authentication still go a long way in keeping bad actors in check.

“Gone are the days when cybersecurity operations were limited to just within the walls of an organization’s office building,” she said. “Granted, this may seem daunting, but by embracing simple best practices and adopting a ‘can do’ human-centric approach to cybersecurity, organizations can empower their employees with the knowledge they need to spot, avoid and report cyber threats.”

DISH FILES TEGNA COMPLAINT

We haven’t even hit December, but the retransmission consent outbursts are already louder than a New Year’s Eve firework display. **DISH** fired the latest salvo Monday, by filing a complaint against **TEGNA** at the **FCC**. DISH lost 65 Tegna stations in 53 markets nationwide on Oct. 6. The satellite provider accused the broadcaster of not acting in good faith in negotiations by refusing to answer “basic questions,” appearing to demand DISH pay for all subs in a DMA whether or not they purchased local programming, refusing consent for any Big-4 affiliated stations unless it also agreed to retransmit CW, MyNetwork TV and independent stations, demanding a “massive” rate increase and agreeing to launch future TEGNA stations. “This is an unusual case because of the internal contradictions within TEGNA’s own proposals. These inconsistencies make it hard or impossible for DISH to ascertain what it is that TEGNA

demands, taking this case even farther away from any concept of good faith than if the improper demands were clear as day,” DISH told the Commission. TEGNA called the complaint “utterly baseless,” saying it welcomes a chance for the FCC to review DISH’s conduct over the course of the negotiation. “TEGNA made a comprehensive proposal to DISH months ago and has updated its proposal multiple times, including a reduction in rates. DISH has refused to counter—it has not proposed rates in more than three weeks,” the broadcaster said. “Rather than engage in transparent PR stunts, DISH should return to the negotiating table in a serious fashion and get a deal done before their subscribers are forced to endure yet another week without their favorite shows, valued local news, as well as marquee college football and NFL matchups.”

REMEMBERING COLIN POWELL

The news of *Colin Powell’s* death felt particularly personal to the cable industry, with his son *Michael Powell* leading **NCTA - The Internet & Television Association** for the past 10 years. The family said the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of State under *George W. Bush* died of complications from a breakthrough case of COVID-19. Powell was 84. He was fully vaccinated, according to the family, and reportedly immunocompromised with a form of blood cancer. **Comcast Cable** President & CEO and **NCTA** Board Chair *Dave Watson* issued condolences on behalf of NCTA’s staff and board. “Today, America lost a trailblazing leader who always put his country first and led with compassion, dignity and grace. We join with the rest of America in mourning the loss of this remarkable human being,” Watson said. Other industry organizations expressed their

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sympathy. “All of us at **WICT** send our heartfelt condolences to NCTA CEO Michael Powell on the passing of his beloved father, American icon, Colin Powell. General Powell, first Black U.S. Secretary of State and youngest Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, serves as a role model for generations of individuals who aspire to greatness,” WICT said in a statement. **ACA Connects** President & CEO *Matt Polka* added his condolences, saying Americans will remember Powell “for a long time as a model soldier, diplomat, White House advisor and a voice of wisdom and reason who reassured the country that it can meet any challenge by living up to its best ideas.” Powell’s passing comes less than two weeks after his son Michael spoke during a virtual **Walter Kaitz Foundation** gathering, urging attendees to encourage COVID vaccinations.

SONY PICTURES SELLS GSN GAMES

Mobile-first video game company **Scopely** is scooping up **GSN Games**, a division of **Game Show Network**, from **Sony Pictures Entertainment** for \$1 billion. Half will be paid in cash, with the remainder coming in preferred equity, providing Sony with a minority interest in Scopely. GSN Games features a suite of free-to-play mobile games, including “Solitaire TriPeaks.” GSN CEO *Mark Feldman* will continue to oversee the GSN Games business once the deal closes.

ALTITUDE SCORES SOME CARRIAGE

ATSC 4.0-powered MVPD service **Evoca TV** added **Altitude Sports** to its lineup. The upstart is hoping the launch will give it an advantage over **Comcast** and **DISH**, which stopped carrying the **Kroenke**-owned net in 2019. To celebrate the addition of the Denver Nuggets and Colorado Avalanche RSN, Evoca’s slashing its price from \$49/month to \$9.50/month for life for new customers for a limited time. Evoca is available in Colorado Springs, Colorado, as well as Boise, Idaho. This is the second RSN deal for Evoca, which also carries **Root Sports**.

DOYLE WON'T SEEK RE-ELECTION

House Communications subcommittee chair *Mike Doyle* (D-PA) announced he will resign at the end of his current term next year. The longtime **House Commerce** member has been a proponent of Title II regulation for ISPs, helped pass legislation that made permanent the mandate that broadcasters and MVPDs negotiate retransmission consent in good faith and has pushed for broadband expansion across the country. “It is my goal to ‘run through the finish line’ as I still have 14 months left on my term. I will be in Washington, DC, tomorrow pushing to get the infrastructure bill and our ‘Build Back Better’ plan passed because the people I am privileged to represent will benefit greatly from their passage,” Doyle said in announcing his retirement. Longtime House member *David Price* (D-NC) also announced Monday that he will not seek re-election.

FCC HAS EYES ON ROBOTEXTS

FCC acting chair *Jessica Rosenworcel* shared a proposed rule-making with the other commissioners that would require mobile wireless providers to block illegal text messaging. That could be through steps like network level blocking or the application of caller

authentication standards to text messaging. In 2020, the Commission received approximately 14,000 consumer complaints about unwanted text messages. “We’ve seen a rise in scammers trying to take advantage of our trust of text messages by sending bogus robotexts that try to trick consumers to share sensitive information or click on malicious links,” Rosenworcel said in a statement. “It’s time we take steps to confront this latest wave of fraud and identify how mobile carriers can block these automated messages before they have the opportunity to cause any harm.”

REDBOX KEEPS EXPANDING STREAMING CHANNELS

Redbox signed a deal with **Cox Media Group** to stream 10 live local news channels from markets including Seattle, Atlanta and Orlando. In addition, it has partnered with **Yahoo! Finance** to begin offering their streaming business news channel. Redbox will also soon start offering more than 20 additional FAST channels on its free streaming service. New channels include America’s Funniest Home Videos, three Sony Canal Spanish language channels and the Wu Tang Collection.

CARRIAGE

ViacomCBS and **Altice USA** renewed their carriage agreement that gives **Optimum** and **Suddenlink** customers access to the programmer’s portfolio of linear and broadcast networks. The deal also gives Altice USA rights to ViacomCBS’ suite of streamers, including **Paramount+**, **Pluto TV**, **BET+**, **Showtime** and **Noggin**. The pair will also continue to collaborate on addressable media and advanced advertising capabilities.

RATINGS

The Season 3 premiere of **HBO**’s “Succession” Sunday netted more than 1.4 million viewers across platforms, marking a series high and the best premiere night performance of any HBO original series since the launch of **HBO Max** last year. The ep was up 21% vs the Season 2 finale and 13% over the Season 2 premiere.

PROGRAMMING

BET will bring back the “Soul Train Awards,” with the show to tape in NYC for the first time in its 33-year history. The Soul Train Awards from the Apollo, will premiere on BET and **BET Her** Nov 28 at 8pm. – *Ina Garten* and **Discovery** signed an exclusive multi-year deal that will see her continue to create content across all of the company’s platforms. The first project under the deal is “Be My Guest (wt),” a 2022 series focused on Garten’s way of welcoming guests and viewers into her home. A half-hour version will air on **Food Network**’s linear channel, but viewers can also find an extended cut on **discovery+** and a companion podcast on other platforms.

PEOPLE

Heather Anderson has moved from **Walt Disney Company** Legal to **ESPN**, where she’s serving as VP, Programming & Acquisitions and reporting to ESPN Programming & Original Content President *Burke Magnus*. She most recently was VP and Assistant Chief Counsel at Disney. – *Gloria Fan* was named Head of Current Series, **Disney Branded Television**. She joins from **20th Television Studios**, where she served as VP of Current Programming.