

Press Releases - Eircom must learn from its mistakes - 17/08/00

Eircom must learn from its mistake

In the wake of the major hacking breach Eircom suffered on Tuesday night

Councillor Eoin Costello has demanded that Eircom learn from its mistakes in dealing with future attacks. The way this security breach was dealt with illustrates a lack of contingency planning by Eircom.

According to Councillor Costello on discovering the breach Eircom unilaterally and without notice blocked access to all subscribers. While this was for reasonable security reasons, subscribers were not informed and when subscribers contacted Eircom they had to use a 1890 number charged at local rates and were then put through to assistants who were in most cases not able to inform customers as to what was going on.

When the new passwords were issued they did not come into operation for up to three hours in some cases.

According to Councillor Costello many businesses and people working from home now rely on access to their emails and the Internet for their livelihood. According to the home based workers organisation there are now 61,000 home based workers in Ireland.

I am demanding that Eircom learn its lessons from this breach and implement immediate changes. While it is difficult to protect networks and servers 100% of the time as hacking attacks on Yahoo and Microsoft have illustrated, Eircom must introduce adequate contingency plans. I recommend that;

1. Eircom establish a freephone number that subscribers can contact in the event of a future hacking attack.
2. That in future new passwords become operational immediately to avoid unacceptable delays in access to email and the internet.

I am also calling on the Minister to increase the penalties for malicious damage to websites and Internet services. At the moment

the penalty is a very low £1,000 fine or 12 months in prison for a summary conviction. As we are trying to establish ourselves as Internet capital of Europe these crimes must be dealt with far more severely.