

## **Be wary of Virus Hoaxes.**

There is a class of virus commonly called a Social Viruses, which is in reality nothing more than a hoax, or cruel joke. Although these viruses cannot spread on their own and do not contain code that can do any damage, they still manage spread to computers world wide damaging many along the way. Although the technically savvy see through a hoax's ominous warnings, many less savvy end users have a deep fear of viruses that malicious hackers can exploit. How? They trick you into both doing the damage yourself, and then emailing the “virus warning” message to all your friends that may prompt them into damaging their computers as well. If you forward one of these social viruses to everyone in your address book, you may have the best intentions, but you are only contributing to the problem.

There are some notorious (and, in some cases, long-lived) virus hoaxes that users continue to spread around. To help you learn to spot a virus hoax, I've collected several hoax e-mail samples.

### **The Sulfnbk.exe hoax:**

The Sulfnbk hoax attempts to entice victims to erase a nonessential file from the Windows directory. Here's part of that message:

A VIRUS could be in your computer files now, dormant but will become active on June 1. Try not to USE your Computer on June 1st. FOLLOW DIRECTIONS BELOW TO CHECK IF YOU HAVE IT AND TO REMOVE IT NOW. No Virus software can detect it. It will become active on June 1. It might be too late by then. It wipes out all files and folders on the hard drive. This virus travels thru e-mail and migrates to the 'C:\windows\command' folder. To find it and get rid of it off of your computer, do the following.

At this point, the e-mail provides instructions for deleting the file. You'll notice that this hoax message names a specific date. Adding to the confusion was the fact that the file indicated, Sulfnbk.exe, could become infected with other viruses and therefore appear infected to a virus scan.

### **The Jdbgmgr.exe hoax:**

The recent Jdbgmgr.exe virus hoax proved much more perilous than the Sulfnbk hoax; it instructs users to delete a useful Windows system file. The hoax describes an infection process similar to that of several real viruses—attacking Outlook and e-mailing itself to the contact list, for example.

Read this excerpt from the original message (note the misspellings):

I got this message about a virus that can produce lot of dammage to your computer. If you follow the instructions, which are very easy, you would be able to "clean" your computer.

Apparently the virus spreads through the adresses book. I got it, then may be I passed it to you too, sorry.

The name of the virus is Jdbgmgr.exe and is transmitted automatically through the Messenger and addresses book of the OUTLOOK. The virus is neither detected by

Norton nor by Mc Afee. It remains in lethargy ("sleeping") for 14 days and even more, before it destroys the whole system. It can be eliminated during this period.

The rest of the message contains instructions for locating and deleting the Jdbgmgr.exe file. The file in question is the Java Debug Manager program, part of the Microsoft Java run-time engine. Although deleting the file will not cause Windows to fail, it can interfere with the proper function of Java applets.

### **Virus hoax Internet resources**

Just as the proliferation of legitimate viruses has spawned an industry devoted to antivirus protection, the proliferation of hoaxes (which are, after all, easier to create and distribute) has caused a number of sites to issue alerts when a bogus warning appears. The following sites contain useful information about virus hoaxes. When in doubt about a received warning, check one of these sites.

- [Vmyths.com](http://Vmyths.com)
- [Hoaxbusters](http://Hoaxbusters)
- [Symantec's hoax page](http://Symantec's%20hoax%20page)
- [McAfee's hoax page](http://McAfee's%20hoax%20page)
- [Trend Micro hoax page](http://Trend%20Micro%20hoax%20page)