

Many Sheriff's Deputies Unaware of Massive Hactivist Data Breach

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Last week, hactivists associated with the Anonymous movement broke into the websites and email servers of more than 70 county sheriff's departments and police departments across the Midwest and South.

About 10 gigabytes of data stolen during those intrusions, much of it personally identifying information on hundreds of law-enforcement personnel, was posted online more than once.

Yet many of those affected did not receive word for several days that their privacy had been breached. In fact, several officers were first informed by SecurityNewsDaily that their personal information had been posted online.

Among the law-enforcement agencies broken into was the Missouri Sheriffs Association Online Training Academy database, located at mosheriffs.com.

The database included names, addresses and [Social Security numbers](#) of deputies and officers associated with various Missouri law enforcement agencies.

The addresses listed weren't all home addresses, and many phone numbers were for offices rather than homes or cellphones, but the blow to personal privacy and [the raised risk of identity theft](#) were severe.

"I was just managing some training we were doing yesterday," Lt. Gabe Duncan of the Audrain County, Mo., sheriff's department, told SecurityNewsDaily. "The guys said, 'No way am I putting my Social [Security number] on there now.'"

Duncan, whose own personal information was revealed, said that the bright side of the hack was that the usernames and passwords weren't good for anything else except accessing the online training program.

But some of the information stolen from other agencies and departments included email threads that revealed the names of confidential informants and undercover officers.

The intrusions were ostensibly in retaliation [for the FBI's arrests of more than a dozen alleged participants](#) in last fall's Anonymous takedown of PayPal.

"We demand prosecutors [sic] immediately drop all charges and investigations against all 'Anonymous' defendants," [read a statement posted online](#).

The intrusions demonstrate how hackers, whether motivated by politics or by monetary gain, [will often attack "soft" targets](#) such as [small businesses](#) or rural organizations rather than the better-defended big-city companies and governmental bodies.

Many sheriff's departments sent out mass emails to deputies, or had their IT departments contact personnel.

Corporal Kevin Tieman, public information officer at the Cass County, Mo., Sheriff's Office (which covers part of greater Kansas City) said his office notified department employees.

"We said, 'Now might be a good time to change your password,'" Tieman said.

Tieman noted that while his department has a policy that people should change their passwords every 90 days, most people don't.

Captain Erik Holland, of the nearby Platte County, Mo., Sheriff's Department, said a bulletin was sent to officers.

"What they do with that information is at their discretion," he said.

In some cases, the officers who told SecurityNewsDaily they were unaware their own personal information had been revealed were working in rural counties, and it may have taken time for the messages to get there.

A few were not current employees of a sheriff's department or were in different departments (the online training program often included other county employees) and thus weren't on departmental email lists.

Michael Covington, executive director of the Missouri Sheriffs Association, referred calls to the association's Web-hosting provider, Brooks Jeffery Marketing of Mountain Home, Ark.

The company did not return a message left with one of its staffers.

As of Tuesday (Aug. 9), the Missouri Sheriffs Association website was still down.