Chron.com, Bad guys using unpatched Internet Explorer flaw to hack Gmail accounts (6.14.12)

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Last week, Google warned its users that "state-sponsored attacks" were under way aimed at accessing Gmail accounts. Those targeted saw a message at the top of their Gmail inboxes warning that "state-sponsored attackers may be attempting to compromise your account or computer".

At the time, Google was mum on the specific exploit, but on Wednesday Microsoft provided details in a security advisory, and they're not pretty. Google also discussed the exploit in its own Blog post.

Cyberscum are taking advantage of an unpatched, zero-day flaw in Windows XP or later to run malicious code on the user's computer. The code is planted when the user visits a poisoned website using any version of Internet Explorer. The exploit also works through Microsoft Office documents.

This is a silent, drive-by download. If you're attacked, you may not know it . . . unless you get that cryptic message atop your Gmail inbox.

On Tuesday, Microsoft release some security fixes for Windows, but a patch for this flaw was not included. Don't think your Windows PC is protected if you conscientiously updated this week. However, Microsoft has released a "Fix It For Me" item that will block the exploit. All Windows users should apply this, even if you don't use IE or Gmail, but keep in mind it does not fix the underlying flaw in Windows. A future patch – possibly one released before the next Patch Tuesday – will be released for a true fix.