

Hilton Honors account flaw

Written by . .

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Following Brian Krebs' blog which details a powerful flaw in the Hilton Hotels site that lets anyone hijack a Hilton Honors account just by knowing or guessing its valid 9-digit Hilton Honors account number, Fred Touchette, manager security research at AppRiver and Ken Westin, security researcher at Tripwire explain why hackers target loyalty schemes and what users can do.

Fred Touchette, manager security research at AppRiver stated that, "It's hard to say whether or not that this flaw has actually been used to attack Hilton Honors users. It seems like this may have been a case where the good guys found it first, though unless people have been closely monitoring their rewards account, it may be very hard to tell. "Members of the Hilton Honors program should double check their accounts for mischievous activity and report it to

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the Hilton Honors group as soon as possible. In light of this recent find, it's likely that they will have the support of the hotel in repairing what may have happened. It would also be wise to go through the password changing routine now that the flaw has been patched as well as change or further secure any other private personal data or account numbers that may have been tampered with in the process.

“This speaks pretty well to the Hilton’s security posture. This flaw was found by the good guys and when approached with the vulnerability, the Hilton team did what was necessary to plug the hole. Unfortunately, some companies in the past have not heeded warnings by security professionals and have paid the price. Since the Hilton showed concern and acted with haste, they show that they truly are concerned about their security and are willing to act fast to fix any issues.”

Ken Westin, senior security analyst, Tripwire also commented, stating; “We have seen a number of loyalty programs hit by hackers from hotel point programs to air miles. These are a popular target of hackers because although these points are a currency in their own right, they are not secured the same way as cash or credit card data. PCI DSS for example does not apply to these systems, even though these points can be exchanged for goods and services. By not putting the same level of due care in securing these loyalty programs airlines and hotels risk hurting their brand and losing the loyalty of dedicated customers. The loss of points is one factor, but there are also security and privacy implications of having access to customers travel history, particularly for high profile executives and politicians.”