

Domain Fraud and Sneak Thieves

By Victoria Lesanges,
Tech Support Director

If you own a domain name - beware! Unscrupulous people are waiting to steal away the lease on your domain, to raise your yearly rent and lock you in to their terms.

Separate from **domain squatters**, who snap up expiring domains and charge a hefty fee to return them, these domain scammers go for smaller, long-term gains. They gain publicly available information about you as the owner of the domain, and then send a very legitimate-looking invoice for the domain. This is not truly an *invoice*; it is a request to transfer the domain to their registrar, but that information is buried in the small print that few of us read at the bottom. Once they have your domain, they may charge you large amounts for yearly renewal and make it very difficult to transfer your domain away to a friendlier registrar.

The best way to avoid this is by knowing who your registrar is, and ignoring invoices from strange companies that you've never heard from. Even if you host your website with us, the registrar may be someone else, such as Network Solutions or GoDaddy. If you're not sure, drop an email to us here at help@swcp.com and we can tell you who your registrar is.

Losing a domain name can be catastrophic if your business depends upon it. Like having your hard drive crash without backups, you may discover you were more dependent on it than you thought.

If your domain does expire, all may not be lost. Network Solutions, for instance, has a grace period, after the expiration but before the name is released for reuse.

If your domain is registered through SWCP, we'll send you periodic email reminders as your domain comes closer to renewal, followed up by phone calls if needed, to keep your domain from expiring. Other registrars may also offer reminder service.



Wireless Gets Tangled

By Jay Nelson, Editor

It seems everything's going wireless these days, including Internet access. An exciting new

technology, it's an attractive draw for coffee shops and the ultimate in convenience for home users. Some universities and even cities have committed themselves to providing free access throughout their areas. Why, then, can't it be everywhere?

Some kinds of Internet connections delivered by radio already successfully link carefully positioned antennae across metropolitan areas. **SWCP Direct**, our own dedicated business wireless service covering Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, and Santa Fe, is a good example. But these systems only work by line of sight. The required dish antenna must be aimed at a radio tower visible from the rooftop. Though unaffected by rain or dust storms, wind can shift the antennae and snow can cover them. Worse still, buildings and especially trees can completely block the signals, making it impractical for the East Mountains and other forested regions. Radio and electrical interference from other sources can be a problem, too, especially in crowded cities.

Building a widespread **Wi-Fi** ("Wireless Fidelity") network for local Internet access without directed dishes is expensive. Lots of special utility poles are needed to mount antennae upon, for instance. It's also harder to deliver the high speeds DSL users expect - not to mention the mobility cell phone users want. And of course, the technology is rapidly changing. Providers are naturally reluctant to commit to one system when a better one might be introduced tomorrow.

Together, these problems can sink many optimistic schemes. Rio Rancho and Sandoval County, for instance, which invested heavily in municipal Wi-Fi, just recently gave up their plans. Even an attempt to build one in Silicon Valley seems to be on the rocks. So it may be a while yet before you can flip open your laptop just about anywhere and surf.

Yet for home end users and patrons of cafés, wireless remains a useful option. However, there are important security issues users need to be aware of. Without special precautions, it may be easy for hackers cruising by outside to hack into one's connection and steal bandwidth or even user data.

These issues will be examined in depth next month.

Reducing Web-based Spam

It's so easy to get discouraged about spam. Even the most up-to-date filters seem to be almost useless sometimes. Spammers are constantly improving their tricks to slip their annoying ads through, disguised to make their messages enticing or at least harmless.

Nonetheless, there are a few simple tricks you can use to at least cut down on the flood, especially if you publish on the Web.

Spammers use programs called "**webcrawlers**" or "**spiders**" that constantly patrol the Web. These programs are not all bad as many search engines, such as Google, depend upon them, and there are ways of trying to limit their access. But the spiders that spammers use aggressively look for email addresses to gather. Any static public page on which your email address appears can be fair game, unless you take evasive steps.

Crawlers often look for the distinctive at-sign, the "@" in every email address, so the simplest way to beat them is to not put any email links on the page. Display your contact information by spelling out your email address - "[joe at swcp.com](mailto:joe@swcp.com)", for instance. An old way to frustrate them is by putting fake info in the address that human correspondents will know to take out, like "joe@swcp-nospam.com". Just be sure you're not accidentally putting in someone else's real domain name! Or you can put your address in a graphic file which spiders can't read.

If you have a **domain name** of your own that you use for mail, you can easily get overwhelmed with all the spam that can attract. One way of reducing spam in that case is to set up an address used *only* on the webpage and use filters at high settings.

In any case, if you get mail through your own domain, tell us what addresses you wish to use. That way, we can set up aliases so that *only* properly addressed mail will reach its true destination. All those messages addressed to other names which would otherwise all wind up in your inbox will be dumped into your spamfile.

Free Net Class Repeats

Due to the success last month and continued interest, SWCP offers 3 more sessions of our *free* "**Introduction to the Internet**" class, covering getting the most from your web browser, email, and other Internet basics. This class is intended for beginners, and focuses on Firefox and Thunderbird, two free Internet applications. It will also cover some basics on staying safe on the Internet, and offer helpful suggestions on how to get less spam.

Evening classes will be held on **October 11 and 25**, from **6-8:30 PM**, plus an afternoon session, **October 18** from **2-4:30**. Space is limited, so call us at (505) 232-7992 to register today! (Sorry, only open to current SWCP, Thuntek, or NMIA customers at this time.)

Webhosting Prices Reduced

SWCP has **lowered prices** for webhosting and **added more services**. New domains are now only \$20/year. For the Basic Webhosting Package, there's now twice the storage space, twice the transfer capacity, and 5 email accounts for the same old price! The Professional Package has likewise been doubled, and 10 email accounts added at the same price as before.

Net Notes

Broadband Use Spreading

A recent study shows that **47%** or nearly half of all adult Americans now have high-speed broadband access at home. Only **23%** still use dial-up there. Growth rates are slowing because many middle-aged, college educated individuals already got it.



SOUTHWEST CYBERPORT, INC.

5021 Indian School Rd. NE, Suite 600
Albuquerque, NM 87110-8910