

Alton Steel, Inc., CEO, Steelworkers president elaborate on phishing scam consequences

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON – Alton Steel, Inc., was shaken with news that vital personal information of employees had been taken in an e-mail scam that targeted the company this week.

Fortunately, the company has quickly responded and both the CEO of Alton Steel, Inc., and president of the Steelworkers Local 3643 hope the quick response pays off.

Alton Steel Inc. CEO Jim Hrusovsky and Steelworkers Local 3643 President Terry Wooden both said Alton Steel, Inc., is the victim of a phishing scheme.

Phishing is the attempt to obtain sensitive information such as usernames, passwords and credit card details (and indirectly money), often for malicious reasons, by disguising as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication.

Wooden said more than 250 steelworkers at Alton Steel, Inc., were targeted in the scheme. The entity used the phishing technique to compromise the company's W2 forms, Hrusovsky and Wooden said.

The CEO initiated a series of meetings to talk with each employee and provide strategy on the protection the company plans to cover.

“Nobody hacked into our systems,” Hrusovsky said. “Our systems themselves were secure. It was a phishing scheme. Someone sent what looks like a valid e-mail and it was sent by a person looking to compromise W2 information.

“We put together an identity check list for our employees and we investigated it as soon as we found out it had happened to see the magnitude of it. We then figured out the steps that needed to be taken to protect our employees. We talked today to them about what they should do with their tax returns and also have them signed up for two years with identity and credit protection through an outside agency for employees and ex-employees caught up in this.”

Through the process the Alton Steel, Inc., CEO said they are finding that phishing schemes are very prevalent throughout the country.

“It seems like this is rampant right now,” he said of these types of deceptive schemes.

The Alton CEO said employees are upset that this has happened but they seem realize the company is doing everything it can to counter the problem.

“You can’t blame them for being upset,” he said. “By signing up for the credit and identity monitoring, it should minimize the damage. We identified it quickly and we think that will minimize the impact.”

Some employees have already discovered that fraudulent tax returns have been filed with the Internal Revenue Service in their names. The CEO said Alton Steel, Inc., will work through those issues with employees.

Wooden said he first learned of the phishing problem on Monday.

“There was no way to track it and they are doing everything they can to protect the employees,” he said. “They gave us a packet of phone numbers and contacts and went step-by-step on how to set up the credit and identity protection. They have done everything I think they could do as a company. They jumped on it fast. No one expects this to happen here in Alton, Illinois.”

Wooden said it is a different age for people today throughout the country and it so easy to be compromised by someone else.

He said the company is urging workers to file their taxes as quickly as possible.

“There is a scheme that is as easy as picking up the phone and saying yes when asked if you are a certain person and having your identity compromised,” Wooden said. “The more technology we have, the easier it is for these people to get into our private lives.”