Dept of Energy Data Breach Exposes 53,000 Employees and Family Members to ID Theft

September 11, 2013 - The Department of Energy (DOE) has announced a data breach that revealed the names, social security numbers and dates of birth of 53,000 of its employees and their family members. The breach also includes private contractors working for the department. It is the second such breach in the past year and it has apparently already led to identity theft.

The latest breach occurred in July. At that time, the DOE announced that 14,000 employees had been affected. During the course of their investigation - which is ongoing - they have raised that estimate to 53,000 people. In an announcement published on the DOE website, the department has stated, "Based on the findings of the Departmentâ€™s ongoing investigation into this incident, we do believe PII (personally identifiable information) theft may have been the primary purpose of the attack."

According to various reports, the breach was the result of cyber-attack on a system known as DOEInfo; an employee database used by the DOE's Chief Financial Officer. The database was house on an old computer system that had not been updated with current software patches to prevent an attack.

Comments on a DOE website by agency employees indicate that some people are already experiencing the agony of ID theft.

This is the second breach at the DOE this year. In January, other DOE computers were hacked and the PII of several hundred employees was stolen.

With regard to the latest breach, the DOE is in the process of notifying affected employees. They expect to complete that process by September 15th. The DOE is offering one year of credit monitoring service to those receiving notification.

For the record, ACCESS believes that credit monitoring is a completely worthless service; only notifying victims after their information has already been stolen and used. Anyone who has been impacted in this breach and who doesn't need access to instant credit would be much better served by freezing their credit file; something which victims can do for free.

Anyone who believes that they may have been victimized already should file a police report, a report to the FTC, and "Department of Energy Privacy Office within the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) at privacy@hq.doe.gov."
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