

Is Your Info Safe?

In today's digital world, information is easier than ever to store, locate and share. In the past either physical copies would have to be made of any documents in order to share them, or they would have to be moved from place to place. Plus, paper took up a lot of space compared to information stored on computer.

For better or worse, the world has moved on from the days of paper. For the better, obviously, because it means there's no more need to have whole rooms dedicated to storing paper files, and it's much easier to find the desired information.

When there's a legitimate need to access your records, it's just a few clicks and key presses away.



However, having all your information a few clicks away can be a double edged sword. Some of those few clicks could be accidental. The wrong key may be pressed.

Maybe the wrong files could be opened or selected, and the exponential increase in the quantity of information you can access with a computer could

cause this mistake to be amplified.

Under the right circumstances, even a small mistake can have life changing consequences. In 2009, a Westbank employee accidentally pressed the zero key too many times, and suddenly Rotorua service station owner Leo Gao became a very wealthy (if dishonest) man indeed with ten million dollars in his account. It's hard to imagine this scenario unfolding if pen and paper were used.

It's also hard to imagine an ACC worker taking your file out of the filing cabinet to work on your case, unintentionally also removing a huge pile of highly private folders belonging to people who have nothing to do with you, and accidentally sending them all to you.

Even worse than these accidental scenarios, what if someone consciously decided they were going to exploit the position of power that having access to your information gave them?

This is exactly what happened in the case of a nurse working for a DHB, who used privileged information about one of its clients as ammunition against her during a Family Court trial.

If you had information about yourself on file with the health system, particularly if you'd been involved with the mental health system due to the sensitivity of the information, you'd want to know all of that material was in safekeeping.

The Government aims for all

New Zealanders to have their health information stored in a single file, accessible to both the consumer him/herself their healthcare professionals, by the end of 2014.

In the wake of the ACC debacle however, the security of your privileged information looks set to increase.

Auditing company KMPG and information privacy experts Information Integrity Solutions, have worked together to analyse these shortcomings and write a report on how client information can be made safer in the future.

The report advocates a system where privacy of information is included from the ground up, rather than being tacked on to existing operations. Testing to verify the security of these systems will begin early in their development, using an assessment tool provided by the Privacy Commission.

Files which contain sensitive information may also have electronic footprints which record exactly who has accessed them and when.

These steps and more should mean that information security is one less thing to worry about.

And remember, if one day the ATM says you've got \$10,000,000 - do the right thing...

Tony Spencer



"Korero Mai" is edited by Gordon Hudson, **"What's On"** by Stephanie Mapley and **"Whakaaro Pai"** by Tony Spencer—all from Like Minds Taranaki. Your news and views are eagerly sought. Like Minds Taranaki, PO Box 5015, New Plymouth, 3rd Floor, Brougham House, Devon Street West, NP, ph 06-759-0966 mental.health@xtra.co.nz. www.likemindstaranaki.org.nz

The December 2012 issue will be distributed in late November 2012. Contributions by Wednesday 21st November, 2012 please.