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## Hackers gang up on chains

Attack threat worse than people think, expert says



Photo by: Nancy Lane

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BREACH? Home Depot may be the latest retailer whose electronic payment system has been hacked.

Wednesday, September 3, 2014

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By: [Jordan Graham](#)

Home Depot could be the latest large retailer to suffer a credit card security breach — and experts say it won't be the last as foreign hackers continue to hunt for weaknesses in America's electronic payment system.

The home-improvement chain said yesterday it is working with law enforcement to investigate "unusual activity" that could suggest a cyber attack.

"We are aggressively gathering facts at this point while working to protect customers," said Home Depot spokeswoman Paula Drake.

The apparent assault on Home Depot follows attacks on Target, P.F. Chang's and Supervalu, a grocery chain that also provides Point of Sale technology to Shaw's and Star Markets in Massachusetts.

"It's just the latest, it's not going to be the last," said Bentley University professor Steve Weisman, a cyber security expert. "We're going to see this over and over again."

The Home Depot attack seems to have originated from the same group of Russian hackers behind the Target breach, according to cyber security journalist Brian Krebs, who first reported the apparent breach. Experts say retailers are failing to keep ahead of the hackers.

"Companies right now are in a very reactive mode," said Jon Miller, vice president of strategy for Cylance Inc. "The infrastructure has never been compromised the way it has been compromised in the last six months."

Miller said these attacks keep happening because companies are not investing enough in prevention.

"They're not doing any type of new investigative research into security or how their infrastructure works and what they need to do to secure it," Miller said. "They could absolutely be doing more."

A Melrose couple who fell victim to the Shaw's and Star Market breach has filed suit against the supermarket and its parent company, claiming that not enough was done to prevent or discover the data breach that the company says may have lasted from June 22 to July 17.

"For this to have gone on for more than a month makes this seem to be a particularly egregious data breach," said Whitney Street, a lawyer for Joanne and Thomas St. Pierre. "The fact that this was so similar to Target and it went on for such a long period of time indicates gross negligence."

The suit is seeking class status, and is seeking damages for credit card information taken not only at Shaw's and Star Markets, but from every supermarket that used Supervalu's point of sale technology across the country. Street said it is likely that number is in the millions.

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Weisman said even if point of sale systems are secured, hackers will move on to other vulnerabilities.

"Things aren't as bad as people think. It's far worse," Weisman said.

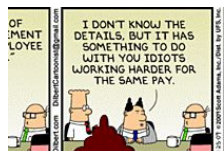
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