Back to Basics: Hardening Computers & Smartphones

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Hardening

Definition - What does *Hardening* mean?

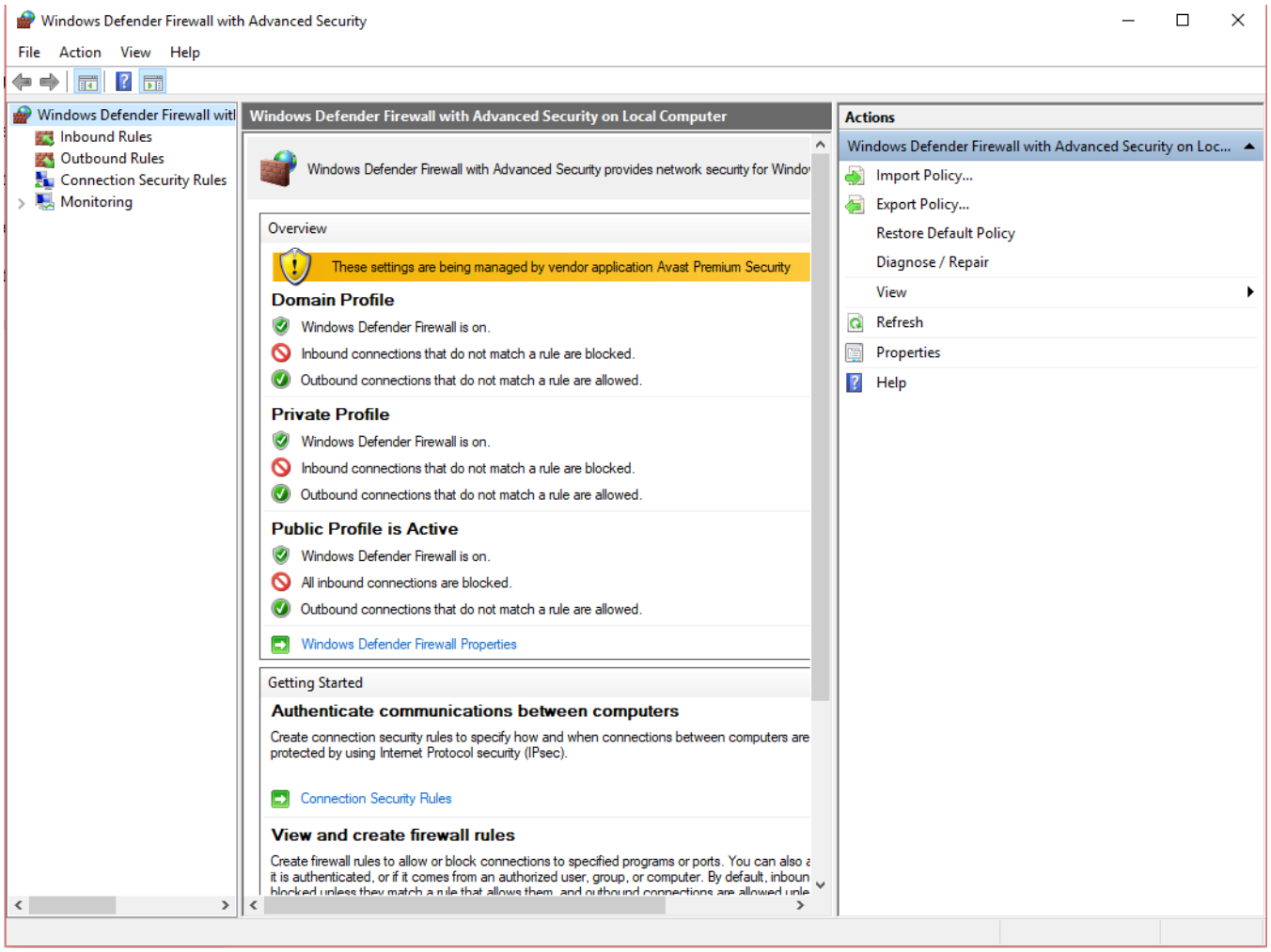
Hardening refers to providing various means of protection in a computer system. Protection is provided in various layers and is often referred to as defense in depth. Protecting in layers means to protect at the host level, the application level, the operating system level, the user level, the physical level and all the sublevels in between. Each level requires a unique method of security.

A hardened computer system is a more secure computer system.

Hardening is also known as system hardening.

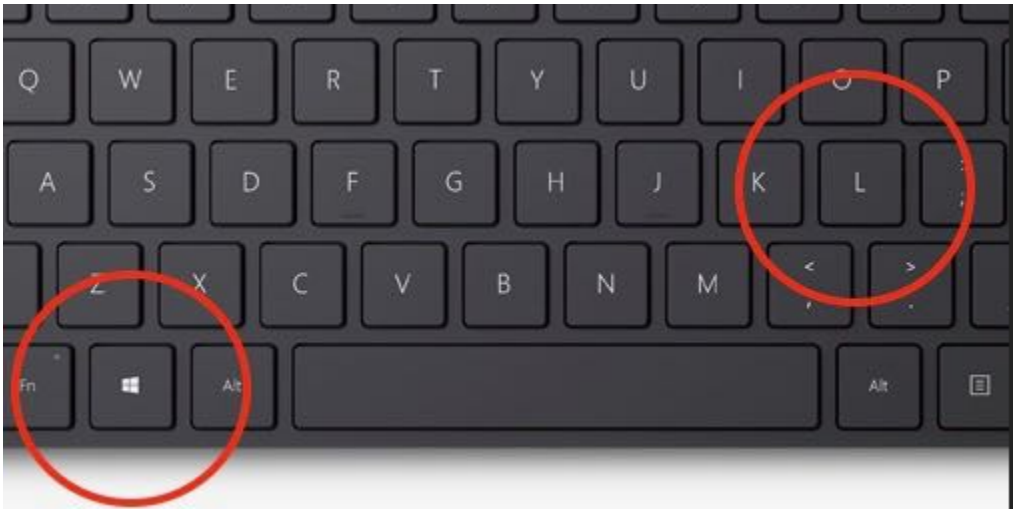
Definition of "Hardening;" credit: Techopedia

Too often, I've noticed that Information Security professionals write articles that target their own peers who already possess a high level of understanding of cybersecurity principles. That's all fine



Advanced Settings within Windows Defender firewall; note it is being managed by a third-party AV product (Avast)

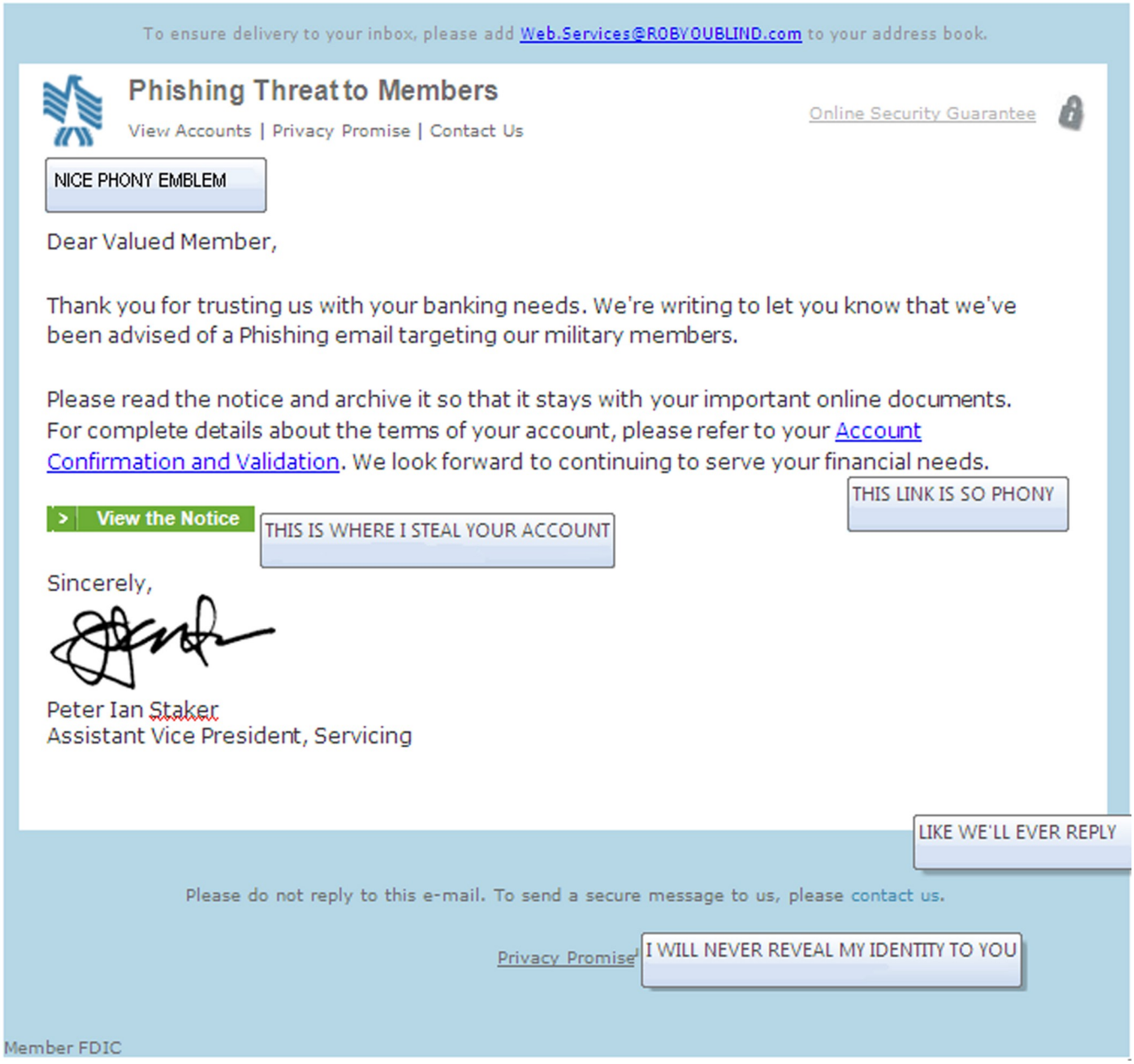
Lock Your Computer or Device When Not Present



To lock your screen in Windows press Windows key + L simultaneously

Physical security is integral to computer security. Without it, any notion of computer security you thought you had completely unravels. Therefore, whenever you get up from your desk or when in a public place, make sure you get in the habit of locking your screen. To unlock your computer, the proper password or PIN should be required (HINT: Don't use "Password1" or any derivation of such).

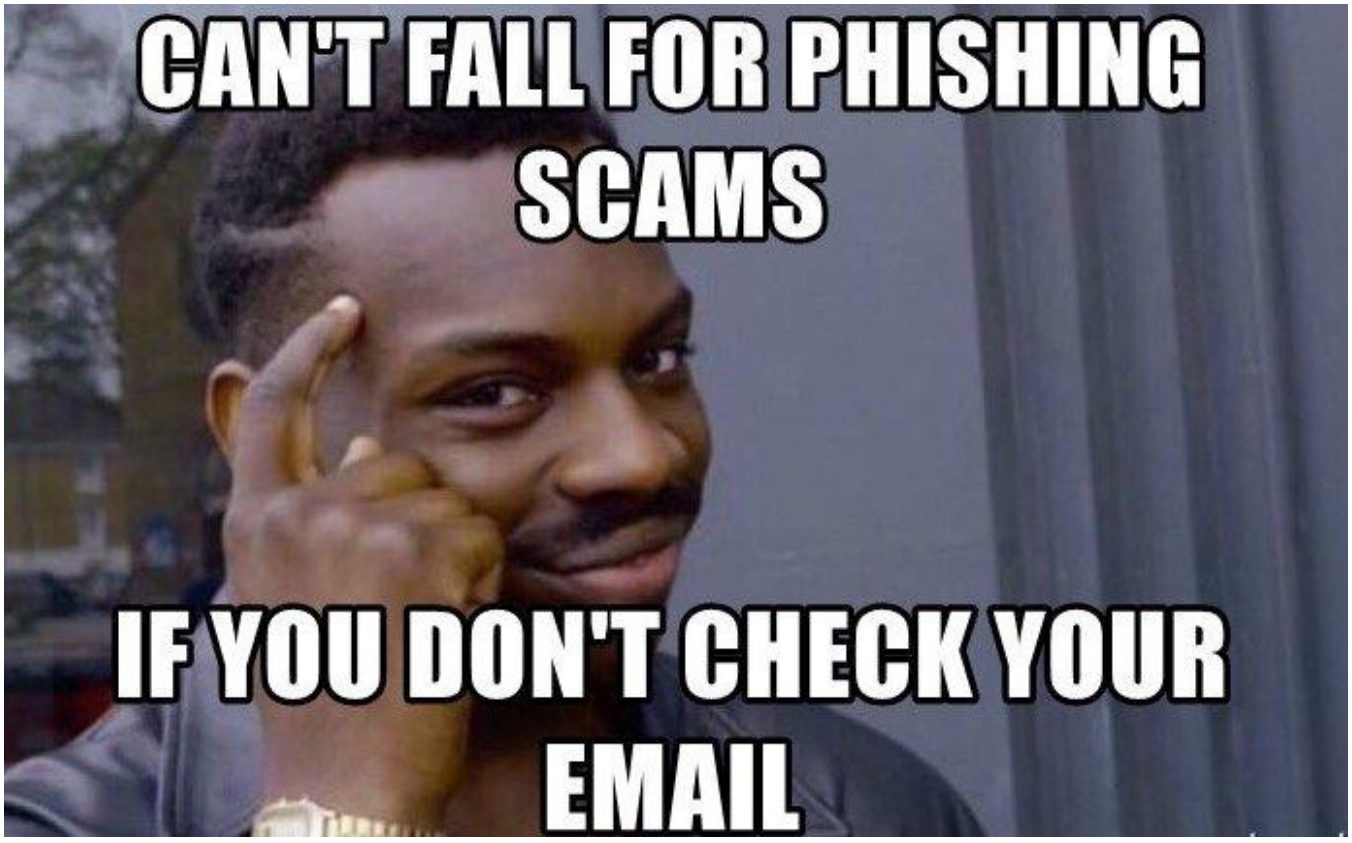
Beware of Suspicious Emails, Attachments, & Links



Sample phishing Email

Yes, all it takes is one wrong click in an Email or on a website to infect your computer or smartphone with malware. So, be very careful and discriminatory when it comes to opening Emails from any sender that you don't trust. Also, never open an Email attachment from a sender that you don't know. In fact, even if it is from a sender that you trust, it is a good habit to get into to scan the file first with anti-virus/malware software to check it first before downloading it and opening the file.

I know what you're thinking…



Haha, that's not realistic though. Use caution, we'll leave it at that.

Treat Smartphones Like The Computers They Are!

Many people don't consider a smartphone to be a computer, but nothing could be further from reality. The rapid advances of modern technology have put the power of a desktop computer into the palm of your hand, but make no mistake about it. Smartphones are susceptible to hacking, viruses, and malware just like computers — because they are computers with processor chips, memory, operating systems, and program applications. So, I ask you, why wouldn't you want to spend a little *more* dough to properly protect it?