Red Herring

Phishing for Good

Have any Nigerian princes asked you to share your cookie recipes lately? Or maybe someone you've never met is sending you an important PDF you need to open right this second or you'll lose your TikTok account.

Yeah, that might have been a criminal phishing for sensitive information. Or, it might have been our own Cybersecurity team keeping us all on our toes when it comes to online safety.

The team has been quietly working for a few years with SDCOE's Enterprise Applications team to create Red Herring, a web-based application that allows organizations to create, schedule, and launch fake phishing emails that are linked to training resources, which aim to raise awareness about phishing and educate employees about everyday cybersecurity threats.

So, that suspicious email you got may have been a clever training tool.

"Phishing attacks continue to make the headlines, and unfortunately, K-12 institutions are not exempt," said **Terry Loftus**, assistant superintendent and chief technology officer. "Leveraging Red Herring, our new phishing simulation platform, districts and county offices of education can efficiently assess staff security awareness as well as provide effective phishing awareness training, all in one solution."

And it's not just SDCOE employees who are learning from these sneaky emails.

The Red Herring platform is now being used by 18 county offices of education across the state and its usage is rapidly expanding.

The project started when Integrated Technology Services leadership looked into buying a program to send fake phishing emails and provide training, but found it to be cost-prohibitive. Instead, they decided SDCOE should build its own and offer a low-cost alternative to other educational agencies.

"Red Herring basically works as a reminder and a refresher about online safety," said **Ali Maroufi**, cybersecurity officer. "Our goal is not to catch people clicking links. We're reminding people to be aware, and when you're really busy and in the heat of the moment, keep in mind what actions online may be unsafe."

In general, SDCOE employees are doing well with spotting troublesome emails compared with colleagues elsewhere. But, as SDCOE gets further into this project, the phishing emails will get more and more difficult to spot.

And the skills we're all learning can benefit us and our loved ones at home too, Maroufi explained.

san diego county office of EDUCATION

FUTURE WITHOUT BOUNDARIES℠

Red Herring Features

A full-featured phishing training and analytics platform.

Easily create phishing campaigns from an ever-growing library of templates.

Users can create their own custom email and landing page templates.

Synchronize users from Azure, Active Directory and Google G-Suite.

Fully supported by the SDCOE Cybersecurity team.

Created for K-12, by K-12 professionals.

Red Herring

https://redherring.sdcoe.net