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McAfee staff face ID theft as auditor loses data
Deloitte and Touche drop the ball...

By Joris Evers

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An external auditor lost a CD with information on thousands of current and former McAfee employees, putting them at risk of identity fraud.

The CD was lost on 15 December by Deloitte and Touche USA, a McAfee spokeswoman said on Thursday. The security software company was first notified on 11 January, and on 30 January it received particulars of the data that may have been on the CD, she said.

The CD contained personal details on all current US and Canadian McAfee workers hired prior to April 2005 and on about 6,000 former employees in the same region, the spokeswoman added. (The security company currently has approximately 3,290 employees worldwide.) The information wasn't encrypted and potentially includes names, Social Security numbers and stock holdings in McAfee.

She said: "We notified our current and former employees last week and the week before. We have no reason to believe that any of the information has been accessed, and we are proactively protecting McAfee current and former employees with credit monitoring services."

Deloitte and Touche confirmed the incident. A representative for the professional services company said: "A Deloitte and Touche employee left an unlabelled back-up CD in an airline seat pocket. We are not aware of any unauthorised access to this data in the two months since the CD was lost."

The McAfee incident is the latest in a string of data security breaches. In the last 12 months, more than 53 million personal records have been exposed in dozens of incidents, according to information compiled by the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse.

McAfee has arranged for past and present US employees to receive free services for up to two years from credit reporting agency Equifax. Similar arrangements are being made with a credit monitoring provider for Canadian employees, the company spokeswoman said.

Deloitte and Touche USA is a multibillion-dollar company that provides audit, tax, consulting and financial services.

Joris Evers writes for CNET News.com