

IT Security & Network Security News

Sony PlayStation Network Data Breach Compromises 77 Million User Accounts

The PlayStation Network has been down since last Wednesday, when attackers walked off with personal information of 77 million members.

Sony's PlayStation Network has been down for nearly a week, and the company finally admitted that an unauthorized person had stolen personal information belonging to 77 million account holders.

An attacker gained "illegal" access to personal information stored on both the PlayStation Network and the Qriocity online music and video service, [Sony announced on its blog on April 26](#). The information included names, addresses, log-in and password credentials, password security answers, email addresses, and birth dates. User purchase history and credit card information may also have been compromised.

"While there is no evidence at this time that credit card data was taken, we cannot rule out the possibility," Patrick Seybold, senior director of corporate communications and [social media](#), wrote on the company blog. The message was also emailed to account holders.

The breach may also impact minors, as PSN account holders can authorize a "sub-account" for dependents. Account details belonging to those dependents were also breached, Sony said.

The PlayStation Network (which provides access to [online games](#), movies and TV shows) and Qriocity were compromised sometime between April 17 and April 19 after an external intrusion into the network. Sony temporarily turned off both services to prevent any more attacks.

Users were left in the dark for six days about the reason for the lengthy outage or about when services would be reinstated.

"Some services" should be restored within a week, according to Seybold. He did not specify which ones would be available first. Users should change their log-ins and passwords when the system is restored.

"This is a huge [data breach](#)," Wedbush Securities analyst Michael Pachter told Reuters. The bigger issue facing Sony is how the attacker will use the stolen information. Pachter estimated Sony generates nearly \$500 million in annual revenue from the services.

Engineers were [rebuilding the system](#) to strengthen the infrastructure from future attacks, Seybold wrote on April 23. "Though this task is time-consuming, we decided it was worth the time necessary to provide the system with additional security," Seybold said.

Sony has also engaged an "outside, recognized security firm to conduct a full and complete investigation" into what happened. In addition, Sony has reported the breach to a San Diego office of the FBI. The company has steadfastly refused to provide any details as to what caused the breach.

The company has said that Sony engineers are working around the clock to resolve the problem, but the team is focusing on implementing a long-term fix instead of just rushing out a patch.

Users should be careful about online scammers trying to trick them into revealing more personal information. "Sony will not contact you in any way, including by email, asking for your credit card number, Social Security number or other personally identifiable information," Seybold said, adding, "If you are asked for this information, you can be confident Sony is not the entity asking."

At least one member of Congress is not satisfied with the time it took Sony to communicate with its users. The six-day delay was "troubling," Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut wrote in an April 26 letter to Jack Tretton, president of Sony Computer Entertainment.

"Although the breach occurred nearly a week ago, Sony has not notified customers of the intrusion, or provided information that is vital

to allowing individuals to protect themselves from identity theft, such as informing users whether their personal or financial information may have been compromised," he wrote. "Nor has Sony specified how it intends to protect these consumers."

Affected PlayStation Network users should be provided with free financial data security services, identity theft insurance and credit monitoring services for two years, Blumenthal said. At the moment, Sony has only provided information about the three credit monitoring bureaus and encouraged affected users to sign up to have a "fraud alert" placed on their account for free.

When PSN first went offline, many initially speculated that the hacktivist organization [Anonymous](#) had launched a distributed-denial-of-service attack against the company to protest the lawsuit against the [PS3 hacker George Hotz](#). While it was possible that individual hackers had targeted the network, Sony was not an official target, Anonymous said on AnonNews. "[For once we didn't do it,](#)" the group said.
