

Member Perspective: REIAC Spring event DOJ/FBI Dealing with Cyber Intrusions

By Ted Northrop Jr., PE

When it comes to cyber intrusions, there are bad actors that don't discriminate when it comes to who they attack.

Local, state and national governments. Financial institutions. Major colleges and universities. Businesses. And yes, the commercial real estate industry.

The REIAC Southwest spring event featured an expert on the topic of cyber intrusions, FBI Special Agent Suzanne Allen. The topic for the virtual event was "Alert: DOJ/FBI Dealing with Cyber Intrusions."

Agent Allen joined the FBI in 2012 and works in the FBI Phoenix field office. She serves as a liaison between private sector companies and the FBI investigating crimes that involve cryptojacking, business email hijacking, insider hacking, cyber extortions, computer intrusions and ransomware.

First on Agent Allen's list was what she called "The China Threat." It's no surprise that China is alleged to be one of the "bad actors." She presented a list of FBI press releases that identified cyber threats from the stealing of trade secrets and selling them to China to an MIT professor arrested and charged with grand fraud.

While there are bad actors out there, Agent Allen also discussed how the private sector is a critical partner in protecting U.S. technological supremacy. Most of our critical secrets are held by private companies in the form of advanced technology, she said. Foreign adversaries, she said, are attempting to use technological advances to equal or surpass U.S. economic and military power.

As Americans in the business sector, there are many resources. In 2020, the Internet Crimes Complaint Center (IC3) received almost 800,000 complaints with reported losses exceeding \$4.1 billion.

Agent Allen also offered a review of common crimes and risks. The included business email compromise (BEC), identity theft, ransomware, spoofing and phishing and online predators.

Her recommendations for companies included network activity baseline, selected password resets, the implementation of two-factor authentication, application whitelisting/alerting and network segmentation, to name a few.

Overall, it was a great Spring event. I hope it made those of us in attendance think twice before we open that odd-looking email.



REIAC Director Ted Northrop Jr., PE, is Regional Vice President & Partner with Atwell, an international consulting, engineering and construction services firm. Ted possesses more than 21 years of experience in land development consulting throughout the Western U.S. and has been instrumental to the growth and success Atwell has seen over the past decade. He oversees operational activities and contributes to corporate strategy, client relations and business development initiatives as a shareholder. He is a Member of Atwell's Board of Directors. Reach Ted at (480) 620-8697 or tnorthrop@atwell-group.com.