

# UC Monthly Safety Spotlight, November 2012

## Careless Chris Opens a Door

By: Kitty

It was a very warm day in late fall and the atmosphere in the office was a bit thick and humid, especially in the center of the building where Jake sat. His shirt was starting to stick to his skin where his back was supported by his chair and he could tell there was no air coming out of the vent over his head. *Time for an ergo break*, he decided. Figuring it had to be nicer outside than inside, he headed for the row of cubicles that had windows in hopes of getting some fresh air without having to actually leave the building.

As he walked along the passage between the bland gray fabric cubicle walls, he glanced longingly through each doorway opening at the sunny sky visible through the windows. It wasn't long until he arrived at the space occupied by his friend, Careless Chris, and paused to chat. "Anything good going on outside?" he asked.

Chris looked up from his monitor and smiled. He knew exactly what Jake meant. Waving one hand casually at his view of the walkway beyond the open window in the back wall of his cube, he replied, "Eh, not much. You know, fresh air, a gentle breeze cooling my fevered brow on a warm afternoon, the usual."

"How'd you get so lucky?" Jake asked enviously, leaning cautiously against the partition corner.

"Clean living, pure thought, honest endeavor," Chris recited with a superior smirk. The assignment of desk locations had always been a closely-guarded and mysterious process, leading to endless speculation on the motivations and biases of the managers who ran the department. "If you'd just wash and wax Elena's truck when she asks, you'd probably have an office with a window and a real door in no time."

"Or a reprimand for ethics violations and sexual harassment," Jake countered grimly. After exchanging a few more pleasantries, he sighed fatalistically and moved on with a muttered, "Back to the salt mines."

Already returning to his interrupted work, Chris indulged himself with a brief look out his window just for the sake of enjoying it. Even if the temperature inside and outside were the same, the illusion of extra personal space and the real increase in light that it afforded definitely made his working day more pleasant. He readily admitted that having an internal cubicle like Jake's would be less desirable, despite the increased disruptions the additional foot-traffic caused at his cubicle's location. In the winter the chilled air coming off the metal frame and single-pane sliding window did mean he had to wear a sweater more often but, reminded by the wistful envy of his friends, it was a small price to pay.

The remainder of the afternoon went by quickly and as usual, Chris ended up trying to finish three things in the last fifteen minutes before 5. His vanpool driver was a stickler about leaving on time and Chris had drawn the ire of the group once already this week for being slightly tardy to the pick-up point so he really didn't want to be late again. In a flurry of activity, he finished the last financial form, and was just about to leave when he saw an email with high importance stating that his email storage quota was over the limit, and to restore it, he needed to supply his email password. The email instructed him to go to a specific website and supply his personal information. He quickly glanced up at the clock... 4:57 already?! It had seemed like an endless, slow day around 1:30, where did the hours go? Chris quickly clicked the embedded link in the email and submitted his username and password. Suddenly a popup appeared and informed him that his computer was infected, and that he should "click here" to scan it. Chris sighs, clicks, and turns off his monitor. "I'll let it scan overnight and I should be all set in the morning!" Chris thought.

Grabbing his backpack with one hand, Chris tugged the window shut, pushed at the latch until it jammed in the worn catch on the frame, and dashed out of the office.

The next morning Chris ambled in to the office, feeling like he had a good handle on the coming day. This time he would be done with the remaining important items by 2, no more last minute panic attack. He even had a mental note to call in a work order to get his window looked at. Having a latch that didn't catch properly on a ground-floor opening big enough to crawl through had been handy once or twice when he had forgotten his key and needed to get in while everyone else was out, but it just wasn't very smart to leave it like that. There were many computers as well as some other valuable equipment in the office and the campus police had sent out another notice about laptop thefts just the week before. Feeling righteously security-conscious, Chris poked his monitor power switch and reached for the phone while it warmed up. Getting the window to lock effectively was going to be his first accomplishment of a busy and productive day.

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It was so easy to put in the request that as Chris put the phone down, he wondered why he hadn't done that months ago when he first noticed the problem. Ambidextrously picking up his coffee mug with one hand and grabbing the mouse with the other, he noticed the background picture on his screen was different. Chris checked his calendar, brought up his email, tapped in his access password, and then headed off to the coffee pot. When he returned, he saw email after email from colleagues asking him to have his computer checked for viruses because of spamming email. His mood only blackened further when he checked his constantly open Facebook account and found a pile of complaints from his friends about the spam he'd be sending them.

Over an hour of lost productive time later, he finally called the campus IT help line. He informed them of the strange email he had received the night before and explained that he was in such a hurry, that he didn't stop and think about the consequences or validity of the email. Chris had gotten an email the night before stating his email storage quota is over the limit and to restore it, he needs to supply his email password. The email asked him to go to a website (linked in the message) and supply his username and password. So, Chris went to the website, and submitted his username and password as requested so he could continue to use his email account. The website he visited logged his username and password information giving it to a hacker. It then presented him with a popup claiming his computer is infected, and he should "click here" to scan it. When "clicking here" his computer actually got infected, changing his Facebook background and installing malware. Once infected, the hackers gained access to his email account, computer software and online accounts, and were able to use it to send spam and also gain access to other social media sites linked to this account.

Chris learned from painful experience that there were more windows for criminal opportunity under his control than he had suspected, and he paid vigilant attention to securing them all from then on.