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Is This E-mail For Real?

Swiffer Wet Jet poisons dogs. Snakehead fish can walk on land and eat small children. Microsoft will pay \$400 if you forward a specific E-mail to twenty people. Starbucks refuses to support US troops. Somebody wants to transfer \$4.5 million to your personal account. Do any of these E-mail stories sound familiar? Do you receive photos in your mailbox? Do you immediately forward them to your friends?

As compelling as these silly stories are, they're all fiction. If you want to, you could start a hoax right now and watch it travel all over the Internet because some naive readers believe them, and then forward them. Let's start one. New photos of Champ the Lake Champlain Monster are found to be real... real what, real spam. If you are aware that these are myths and hoaxes, they can be fun to read. But sadly, most readers actually believe these E-mail hoaxes, causing damage to legitimate manufacturers or companies and blemishing good names. Don't get suckered by these hoax E-mails— just delete them after you have a good laugh.

A Hoax Guide to E-mail

- Fake Photos (Sharks eating helicopters, monster cats). Photos are easy to manipulate with a computer and about \$100.00 worth of software.
- Chain Letters (threats, requests, promises of money). The only money you will see is yours leaving your bank account.

- Mythical Stories, (public warnings, shocking narratives, outlandish claims). Public Healthcare will bankrupt us all... OK, that might be true.
- Outright Scams ("phishing" and phone schemes attempting to access your finances). Once they have you hooked they will phish you right out of all your money.

Identifying a Hoax

- Be skeptical of all email sent from people you do not know.
- Resist the urge to click the link or forward the message.
- Do your homework and confirm the message.
- Tell your friends if they sent you a hoax E-mail.
- For E-mails that ask you to confirm your bank or ebay identification, never respond or click the link.

What to do if You Have Been Hoaxed or Phished

- Contact the US Federal Trade Commission.
- Contact the local Police department.

How do you stop the hoaxes and scams? Simply stop sending them to your friends, tell your friends about scam E-mails that you receive, and report it to the authorities.

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