

So, What Are We Seeing at CATIC with Phishing?

At CATIC, we are accustomed to seeing a multitude of phishing emails that pertain to the following subject lines:

- Smith, Johnson, and Matthews /TS5879-0236
- Loan Payoff on Purchase.
- Foreclosure Form – Jones Law.
- Rich Johnston Sent you Documents via Dropbox.
- Invoice Proposal.
- Final Contract Agreement.

As one can see, many of these subject lines are deliberately vague and that is used to the threat actors' advantage to try and get their foot in the door with unsuspecting users, who may be working on a housing transaction. Below is a phishing email that a CATIC user received. We have highlighted the red flags as well:

From: John Smith <jsmith@jsmithlaw.com>

To: Maddie Thomas

John Smith Shared, "JSmith Law Documents with You"

Generic title affiliated with this message.

John smith shared documents with you for review. Here's the document you requested:



JSmith Law Documents #87469

If it was a true attachment, it would be near the subject line. However, this "attachment" is actually a picture of a PDF with an embedded link.

<https://www.valleyviewgardens.net>

[Open](#)

If you hover over the "Open" link, it would bring you to a random, unaffiliated website.

This link only works for the direct recipients of this message.

To potentially avoid these types of phishing emails, here are some tips that can make you stay vigilant:

- Hover over **ALL** links. If you receive an email from DocuSign with a link within the email, make sure it goes out to the intended site.
- Remain cautious about telephone calls from external sources that may seem vague.
- Check names within the email, as threat actors are unfamiliar with one's nicknames.
- Check for misspellings, odd sentence structure, punctuation issues, etc., when looking at an email.
 - Even with AI in the mix, threat actors still mess up!
- Be wary of attachments that are URLs.
 - Embedded PDFs within emails are the biggest offenders in this category.

- Look for vague introductions.
 - Dear Sir/Dear Madam.
- Check the timestamps of emails.
- Simply ask, “Was I expecting this?”

****Disclaimer:**** The email example has been modified for privacy reasons and is a simple rendition of what we see at CATIC.

© CATIC – All rights Reserved.

