

## TITLE – EMAIL ATTACHMENTS & SENSITIVE INFORMATION - TRANSFER FILES SAFELY & SECURELY

AUTHOR – Alicia A. Slade

PUBLICATION – Pennsylvania Family Lawyer

ISSUE / DATE – October/November 2007

Email has definitely changed the way we do business for the better! However, we are faced with growing issues regarding email. Two of these issues are 1.) email attachments and 2.) sensitive/personal information within email.

As email has evolved over the past several years, so has the exchange of files through email and also the type of information that is emailed, rather than mailed or sent via facsimile. Consider what information you and your staff include within the body of an email; what types of files you attach to emails; what information is contained in the attached files; and the size of the attachments.

When email attachments are received by an email server, the email server's virusscan and spam filter software programs are set to scan email as it is received for viruses and also spam. When an email is received with an attachment, not only is the email scanned, but also the attached file. The virusscan and spam filter software must decode the attachment and then scan the file for viruses or properties of spam. When the attachment is large, this can bring an email server to a halt. No other email can be sent or received through the email server when this occurs. This can not only happen when you host your own email, but also if your email is hosted by an ISP (Internet Service Provider). The email that is clogging the email server must be removed before other email will be sent/received by the email server. Also, some email servers are set not to accept attachments over a certain size and thus will reject the email.

Also, when an email is sent with an attachment, the email goes into your Sent Items Folder or if it is received, it goes into your Inbox. Not only is the email in the folder, but so is the attached file. Therefore the size of your Sent Items Folder or Inbox is determined by the email and also the file attachments. Most users have space limitations on their email boxes. Attachments take up extra space. If users do not archive emails on a regular basis all of the file attachments that are within emails in the Inbox and Sent Items folder bog the email client down and also the email server.

Additionally, most email is not secure because the email is not encrypted and neither is a file attachment. One option is to encrypt your email. If your email is encrypted, then the receiver of the email must have a key to decrypt the message. Unfortunately, this can be cumbersome to make sure all recipients of your email have keys to your encrypted email.

With all of the sensitive information being exchanged today, every firm should be aware that there are better methods of sharing documents and sensitive information. Some firms consider setting up an FTP (file transfer protocol) server to upload/download files. The major concern with an FTP server is that the server is not secure. A SFTP (secure file transfer protocol server) would be a much better option because there are logins and passwords and the data is encrypted. However, SFTP servers become much more costly to setup.

A safe and secure option is Net-Filer, a new product developed by Nauticom Internet Service Provider, [www.net-filer.net](http://www.net-filer.net). Net-Filer is a wonderful, inexpensive option to transfer files safely and securely. Net-Filer allows you to setup a secure file transfer login and password for any number of users so that you and your clients can upload and download files to one another. No need to worry about security, encryption, or large attachments that clog email. Net-Filer takes care of it. The product is priced by the number of logins; 1 login is \$8.95/month, 5 logins are \$19.95/month, 10 logins are \$29.95/month, 25 logins are \$39.95/month, 50 logins are \$49.95/month, Unlimited logins are \$59.95/month. You are able to setup file folders for individual client logins. One user is unable to see another user's folder and files. It is simple to setup user logins and passwords and easy to upload/download files. Net-filer is a wonderful product to transfer your files securely.

Many industries are moving to this method of exchanging files and sensitive information with their clients. Your clients are becoming more aware of the pitfalls of attaching files to emails and also including sensitive information within the body of the email. Instead, consider setting up a login and password in Net-Filer for your client so that you are able to exchange information more safely and securely. Your clients will appreciate the effort you have taken to protect their information.

*Alicia A. Slade is the President/CEO of Plummer Slade, Inc. Plummer Slade has been providing computer networking and business solutions to law firms since 1988.*