Personal Data Breach

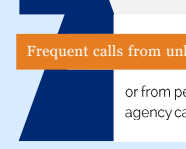
What is a personal data breach?

A personal data breach is a broad term that applies to:

- Accidentally destroying personal data
- Deliberately, unlawfully destroying personal data
- Losing personal data (or losing control of personal data)
- Modifying personal data without permission
- Providing access to or sharing personal data with someone not authorized to view it

Losing a device with personal data on it

Theft of a device with personal data on it



Emailing personal data to the wrong person

Someone altering personal data without permission

Access by an unauthorized third party

Personal data not being available when needed

Hypothetical examples of personal data breaches

Personal data breaches can range from low to high in impact. For example:

- A staff member accidentally deletes a list of community members who participated in an event from last week. The information is able to be partially retrieved from a backup.
- An attack on the network results in the names and job titles of 50 employees being unlawfully accessed.

LOW — HIGH

- When transferring to a new email system, multiple email accounts are inadvertently deleted permanently.
- Accident reports containing detailed medical information are sent by mistake to a wrong recipient outside of the organization. The recipient does not respond to email requests to delete the information.
- Credit card information is stolen and published on a public website.

How does a personal data breach happen?

The vast majority of personal data breaches are linked to a mistake made by a human. Some common errors are:

- Not paying close attention and sending data to the wrong recipients
- Not applying access controls properly; forgetting to timely remove access
- Malicious actions by former or upset employees who still have access to the company system
- Sloppy data storage - keeping copies in multiple places, increasing the exposure risk
- Opening emails from unknown senders and clicking on unknown links
- Not being vigilant of who is standing around you when working with personal data

Cautionary tales from personal data breaches in the news

Snapchat:
In 2016, a scammer posed as the CEO and tricked an employee into emailing over 700 current and former employees' personal payroll information.

NHS:
130 email accounts were compromised when scammers sent phishing emails with a link to a fake Microsoft 365 login page, prompting employees to provide their login details.

What are some signs of a possible data breach?

Sudden changes to your system files

Hackers can infiltrate your system undetected and can change important system files in just a few minutes.

User logins that don't work anymore

If you are suddenly locked out of an account, it could be due to a hacker who has obtained your login credentials.

Slow and unusual account activity

A slow browser or your computer suddenly freezing and crashing are all possible signs of a virus.

Frequent calls from unknown numbers

or from people pretending to be from your bank or a governmental agency can mean that your phone number has been compromised

What harm do personal data breaches cause?

Personal data breaches can result in negative consequences for individuals, including:

- Financial loss
- Damage to reputation
- Identity theft or fraud
- Physical harm
- Loss of confidentiality
- Discrimination
- Loss of control over their personal data

5 tips for preventing a personal data breach

Attend training on data privacy and cybersecurity. Know how to recognize phishing attempts.

Be wary. Never be bullied into giving personal information. Hackers like to create a sense of fear and urgency. Don't fall for it!

Be vigilant about what sites you visit and what links you click on

Keep it secure. Don't use public or unsecure Wi-Fi for activities involving personal data

Stay up to date. Install system updates on your mobile phones and tablets as soon as they become available.

جامعة الملك عبدالله للعلوم والتقنية
King Abdullah University of Science and Technology

Everyone is responsible to immediately report personal data breaches to
DPO@kaust.edu.sa