We are writing to let you know about a data incident in which a database containing your personal information was accessible on the internet without encryption or other security features. The personal information in question consists of your email address (the email address at which you received this message) and the password you created to access one or more of the user accounts identified below. No other personal or confidential information was stored in the database or accessible during this incident.

What happened?

The California Environmental Health Tracking Program (CEHTP) of the Public Health Institute (PHI) became aware on August 4, 2016 that an electronic database containing email addresses and corresponding passwords for individual user accounts at one or more of the sites listed below was accessible on the internet without encryption or other security features for approximately 30 days. The accounts in question are:

1. Active user accounts used to gain access to the CEHTP Water Boundary Tool at http://cehtp.org/page/water/.

2. Expired accounts used in the past to gain online access to the CEHTP Geocoding Tool. The CEHTP Geocoding Tool was permanently offline at the time of the incident and was not accessible by means of these expired user accounts.

3. Expired accounts used in the past to gain online access to a California Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Investigations Branch (EHIB) content management system including the EHIB time accounting system. The EHIB content management system and EHIB time accounting system accessed through these accounts was permanently offline at the time of the incident and was not accessible by means of these expired user accounts.

Our records indicate that you have had a user account at one or more of these sites.

What information was involved?

The database in question contained email addresses and passwords used by individual users to access the sites described above. No other personal or confidential information was stored in the database.

What we are doing.

Immediately after learning that the database was unsecured, the database was removed from the internet and all passwords were removed from the active system. Returning users of the CEHTP Water Boundary Tool are required to create a new password the next time they log on to the site. Our system has been updated to use bcrypt, an industry standard encryption solution, to protect user account information.

All user accounts associated solely with the retired CEHTP Geocoding Tool and the retired EHIB content management system were closed out. User accounts associated with the Water Boundary Tool remain open. As indicated above, users of the Water Boundary Tool will be asked to reset their password upon login.

What you can do.

If the password you used for any of the three accounts listed above is the same or similar to a password you are using on other systems or accounts, it is recommended that you change the password on those other accounts. Review your accounts for suspicious activity and be cautious of any unsolicited communications that ask for your personal information or refer you to a web page asking for personal information.

For more information

Please contact us if you have questions or further inquiries about this event. We can be reached by email at privacy@cehtp.org.

The Public Health Institute regrets that this incident occurred and we apologize for any inconvenience. Please be assured that we do not take this incident lightly. We have taken steps

to mitigate risk and we have updated our security procedures to ensure that user account information remains protected. Thank you for your understanding,

Sincerely,

Jim Simpson
General Counsel
Public Health Institute
simpsonj@phi.org

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