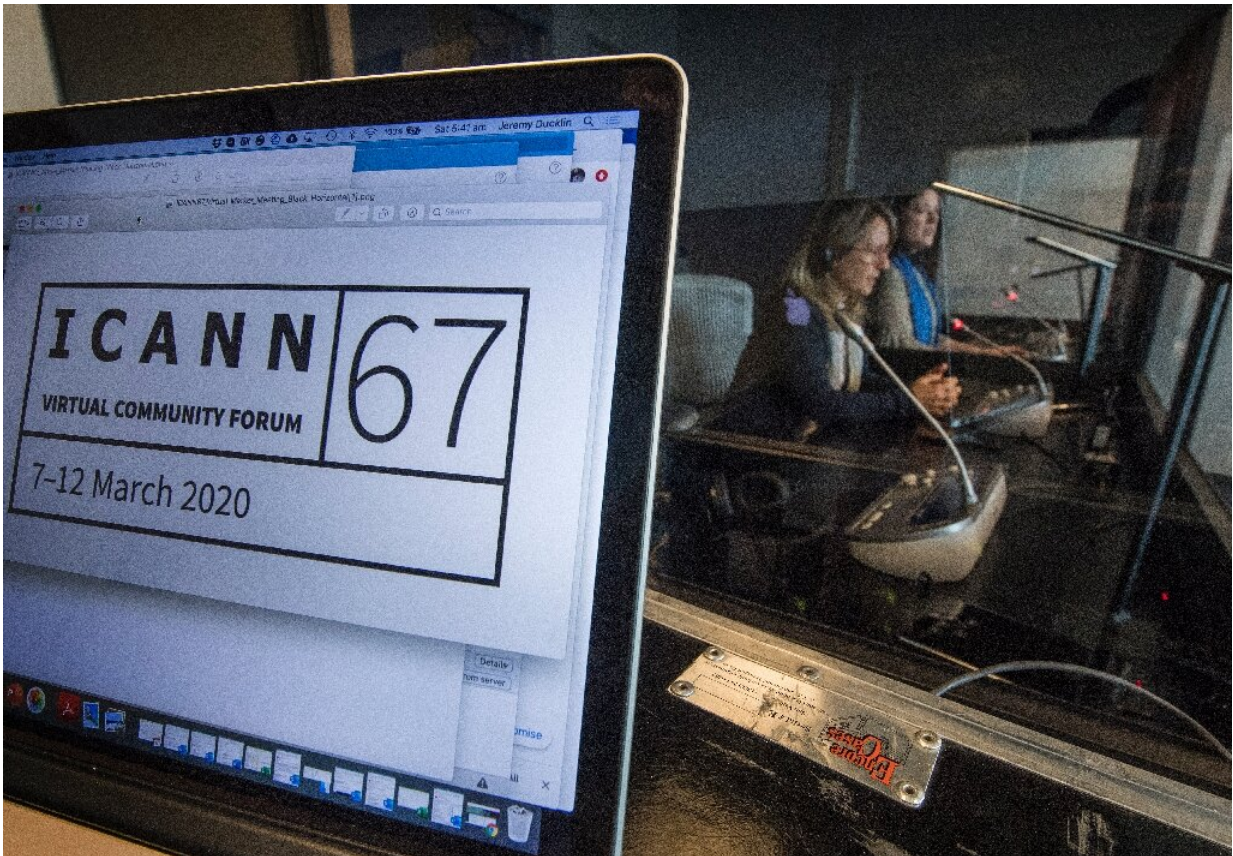


Internet overseers seek crackdown on coronavirus website scams

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The internet's online address manager ICANN is calling for stronger efforts to stop the proliferation of fake websites using the coronavirus pandemic to scam consumers

The agency that oversees online addresses on Tuesday called for those

issuing website address to vigilantly thwart cyber scams exploiting coronavirus fears.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers took the unusual step of firing off a letter to "registrars" entrusted with the business of issuing [website names](#) around the world.

"As you're also aware, ICANN cannot, under our bylaw and practically speaking, involve itself in issues related to website content,"

ICANN chief executive Goran Marby said the global agency does not have authority to manage website content but added: "That does not mean we are unconcerned or unaware of how certain domain names are being misused in fraudulent activities during this global pandemic."

The deadly coronavirus and dramatic steps taken to combat its spread have led to "an explosion of cybercrime" with criminals preying on people desperate for ways to protect themselves and those they love, according to recent report prepared for ICANN.

Online criminals typically use deceptively named websites for phishing, spam or malware campaigns, the report concluded.

In March, at least 100,000 new website names were registered using terms such as "covid," "corona," and "virus," according to the report.

Thousands of such websites unleash floods of spam ads for coronavirus-themed scams, according to the report.

"COVID-19 is unique in that it is truly global; and the cyber bad guys haven't drifted toward it, they have rushed toward it like a barrel off Niagra Falls," ICANN security chief John Crain told AFP.

"This is a new low, preying on people at a time like this."

The latest warning was issued to the hundreds of internet registrars around the world accredited by ICANN to issue new website [domain names](#).

"We are trying to remind them that this is not about business as usual," Crain said, noting tha ICANN is not a regulator in the typical sense so has no outright enforcement authority.

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