

Philadelphia Inquirer hit by cyberattack causing newspaper's largest disruption in decades

May 15 2023



A Philadelphia Inquirer newspaper vending machine stands in Philadelphia on Nov. 30, 2006. The Philadelphia Inquirer experienced the most significant disruption to its operations in 27 years due to what the newspaper calls a cyberattack on Sunday, May 14, 2023. The company was working to restore

print operations after a cyber incursion that prevented the printing of the newspaper's Sunday print edition, the Inquirer reported on its website. Credit: AP Photo/Matt Rourke, File

The Philadelphia Inquirer says a weekend cyberattack caused the biggest disruption to its operations in 27 years and prevented it from publishing its Sunday print edition.

The attack was detected Saturday morning when employees found that the paper's content-management system wasn't working, [the Inquirer reported on its website](#).

The paper "discovered anomalous activity on select computer systems and immediately took those systems off-line," Inquirer publisher Lisa Hughes said.

The cyberattack caused the largest disruption to the publication of Pennsylvania's largest news organization—the company publishes The Philadelphia Inquirer and The Philadelphia Daily News—since a blizzard in January 1996, the company reported.

Weekend editor Diane Mastrull said Monday that the newspaper had been dealing with an "extraordinarily busy weekend," with three nights of Taylor Swift concerts, the Philadelphia 76ers playing a playoffs game 7 and mayoral candidates making their final pitches to voters.

"I'm amazed to say we got all of that coverage on our website in our electronic edition on Sunday and then in the papers today," Mastrull said. She called that an extraordinary feat by systems personnel and one that required patience from reporters and editors using workarounds to write and edit stories—as well as being in "the awkward position" of having to

report on the paper itself.

On Sunday, subscribers were sent the early "bulldog" edition of the paper that didn't include stories written Saturday, Mastrull said. On Monday, however, subscribers got "the full Monday paper on their doorstep," she said, Mastrull added that workers assume that will be the case Wednesday morning, "when people will be looking for election results." Classified advertisements, including death notices, will not appear until Wednesday, officials said.

"We asked questions and did not get many answers, and that has frustrated the staff, but I understand it's a very complex situation," said Mastrull, who is also president of the newspaper's guild. She added that employees and subscribers remain concerned about whether their personal data may have been compromised.

Employees have been barred from working in the newspaper offices at least through Tuesday, with the company saying that was necessary "because access to company internet servers has been disrupted," Mastrull said. Hughes said the company was looking into co-working arrangements for Tuesday.

Mastrull serves as president of the NewsGuild of Greater Philadelphia, which represents workers at The Philadelphia Inquirer and Philadelphia Daily News, as well as some suburban papers. She said that when ongoing contract talks resume, guild officials want to ensure that the contract "reflects what company needs to do to protect us against cyberattacks and other things we have to worry about in this new age."

An investigation is ongoing into the extent and specific targets of the attack, and the company has contacted the FBI, Hughes said. The FBI in Philadelphia declined to comment in response to questions from Inquirer journalists, the newspaper reported.

© 2023 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Philadelphia Inquirer hit by cyberattack causing newspaper's largest disruption in decades (2023, May 15) retrieved 7 May 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2023-05-philadelphia-inquirer-cyberattack-newspaper-largest.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.