

West Virginia Executive Branch Privacy Tip of the Week

Webcam Invasion

Question:

I heard a horror story about the possibility of hackers turning on my webcam and watching my family. Is this just a rumor or is this really possible?

Answer:

Yes, it is possible for someone to use a virus to hack in and gain remote access to your webcam. This process is a growing privacy and security issue. People hack into webcams for various reasons, including those who are Peeping Toms or thieves looking to steal personal information. Usually, the hacker can access your webcam by secretly installing software on your computer. There are several tips you can take in order to avoid having your webcam used for spying purposes:

- Only download files from a trusted source.
- Make sure your anti-virus software is updated regularly.
- Enable firewalls.
- Unplug your webcam or cover it up when it is not in use (also disable the microphone).
- Use a webcam which has a light indicating when it is in use. This function cannot be disabled by a hacker and will allow you to tell when someone is accessing your webcam without your permission.