

Rebecca Moody
Via WhatDoTheyKnow

Date: 10 December 2021
Ref: FOI 28 2021 22 FY

Dear Ms Moody

Re: Malicious email volume

Thank you for your request for information on 11 November 2021 in which you requested information about the volume of malicious emails the PPF receive. I have reproduced each of your questions along with our response.

1. How many malicious emails have been successfully blocked?
2. What percentage of malicious emails were opened by staff?
3. What percentage of malicious links in the emails were clicked on by staff?
4. How many ransomware attacks were blocked by the department?
5. How many ransomware attacks were successful?

You asked for this information to be provided for each year since 2018. This information is not held for 2018 itself. We can confirm that we hold this information for 2019 onwards. The held information is being withheld. We believe that disclosure would be likely to prejudice the prevention of crime, and that therefore the exemption at section 31(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 applies. Further explanation of why this exemption applies is provided in the annex at the end of this letter.

Your privacy

We use personal data provided by you, such as your name and address, to comply with our legal obligations to respond to freedom of information (FOI) requests and to carry out tasks necessary to improve our FOI performance generally. For more information about how the PPF handles personal data, please see our privacy policy at <https://www.ppf.co.uk/data-protection>.

Requesting a review

I hope that the information we have provided is of use. If you have any concerns about the way in which your information request has been treated, full details of our Freedom of Information procedures can be found at:

www.ppf.co.uk/freedom-information

Protecting People's Futures

The Pension Protection Fund is a statutory fund run by the Board of the Pension Protection Fund, a body corporate, under the Pensions Act 2004

Appeals are heard by a member of the PPF's senior management team who has not been involved in considering the initial request for information and a response to an appeal will be provided within 20 business days of receipt.

If, following such an appeal, you are still not satisfied you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner under Section 50 of the FoIA 2000. There is no charge for making an appeal to the Information Commissioner. Generally, the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the appeals procedure provided by a public body. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House,
Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.
Telephone: 01625 545745
Website: www.ico.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,

Paul Gibbons

Information Compliance Associate

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Annex: why exemptions apply

Information being withheld: Numbers of malicious emails successfully blocked; percentage of malicious emails opened by staff; percentage of malicious links in the emails clicked on by staff; numbers of ransomware attacks blocked by the department; and numbers of successful ransomware attacks.

Exemption that applies: Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) s.31(1)(a) – information is exempt if its disclosure would be likely to prejudice the prevention or detection of crime.

Reasoning:

It is the PPF's view that the disclosure of this information would be likely to compromise the PPF's information security strategies by giving potential cyber criminals an insight into any potential vulnerabilities. Malicious actors could deduce from the information whether an attack they had initiated had been successful, and how successful different types of attack are likely to be. There is a real and significant risk that these outcomes would result from disclosure.

Section 31(1)(a) is a qualified exemption, as such we have gone on to perform a public interest test in order to assess the public interest arguments for and against declaring whether or not the requested information is held.

In applying this exemption, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the interest in favour of disclosure.

Factors in favour of disclosure:

- It would demonstrate a commitment to transparency;
- It would give the public a realistic insight into the threat of cyber attack faced by the PPF;
- it would provide some assurance that the PPF has put effective measures in place.

Factors in favour of withholding:

- disclosure would be likely to assist malicious actors to identify vulnerabilities;
- maintenance of the integrity and security of the PPF's systems is in the public interest;
- personal and sensitive data held by the PPF could be compromised by a successful cyber attack;
- there is a public interest in preventing criminal activities.

On balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs that in disclosing the information.