Fake Professional Complaint that Installs Malicious Software

Lawyers in a number of jurisdictions have received emails purportedly about complaints filed against them from people posing as professional regulators. These emails request that the lawyers click on a hyperlink or attachment to view the complaint made against them. The hyperlink or attachment then installs malicious software and/or ransomware on the lawyer's computer, blocking computer login access until the computer user pays money to get it unlocked.

Some emails have included language such as "Dear bar member" and "A complaint has been filed against your business. Enclosed is a copy of the complaint which requires your response. You have 10 days to file a rebuttal if you so desire. You may view the complaint at the link below." Others have said "see you in court" in the subject line, with a link to what is described as an encrypted document. This email could appear to be from a lawyer who is known to the recipient whose email account has been hacked. The encrypted document is actually a computer virus.

Officials in New York, Texas, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Florida are among those warning about this scam. ALIA has not yet received a report of the Canadian jurisdiction.

Action to be taken:

Lawyers who receive similar emails should delete them immediately and should not open any links or attachments. If you receive an email regarding a claim or complaint against you, you can confirm its authenticity by calling ALIA at 403.229.4716 (respecting claims) or the Law Society at 403.229.4700 (respecting complaints). Everyone should use caution – including calling the sender to confirm authenticity – when opening links and attachments from unknown senders.

The Alberta Lawyers Insurance Association (ALIA) provides the ALIAlert service to all Alberta lawyers participating in the indemnity program. ALIA does not independently confirm the facts or allegations provided to us. If you believe that you have been targeted by potential fraudulent activity, please Contact ALIAlert.