



IDG CONTRIBUTOR NETWORK [Want to Join?](#)

## EMERGING TECHNOLOGY IN THE ENTERPRISE

By **Erika Morphy**, ★ Advisor, Writer, Computerworld | FEB 2, 2015 2:38 PM PT

Opinions expressed by ICN authors are their own.

### OPINION

## Hacked because of the weather

Computer infections rise, dramatically in some cases, city by city for no obvious reason. Except one.



Remember last week's Winter Storm Juno? It was originally billed as a historic weather event for the Eastern Seaboard but as many residents of the region are pleased to tell you, it didn't turn out to be quite so bad. It was, though, bad enough to keep tens of thousands of workers home and at some point they turned on their computers, either for entrainment or to keep up with work. Or both.

What happened next for many of these workers is what actually made the storm memorable (although they might not have realized it at the time) they got hacked and the telecommuters might well have exposed their employers' systems to the malware as well depending on the safeguards in place.

Now it is a new week and a new storm is bearing down on much of the country. Indeed for the rest of the month and into the next we can expect to lather, rinse, repeat: Snow days for adults are all but obsolete in this era of telecommuting.

For that reason it is well worth examining some underlying trends:

- 1) It is, in fact, difficult to say why a person or company gets infected with malware in one city compared to another.
- 2) The one exception to that rule, though, is the weather.

"It really is one of the few things we can count on when it comes to predicting where infections will rise," Patrick Morganelli, SVP of Technology at [EnigmaSoftware.com](http://EnigmaSoftware.com), tells me.

The company recently startled the good folks in Tampa, Fla., with its finding that computer infections on a per capita rate in the city was 561.81% higher than the national average in 2014 -- the highest in the nation. Other cities with higher-than-average rates of infection were Orlando, at 386.91% higher than the national average, followed by St. Louis at 369.37% higher than the national average.

The obvious question, of course, is why Tampa, or for that matter, why any of the other cities on Enigma's list, which ranged from Salt Lake City (306.65% higher than the national average) to Little Rock (215.61% higher than the national average) to Washington, DC (169.56% higher than the national average).

Unfortunately there is no obvious reason, which is maddening to virus hunters, residents and local businesses alike.

There are theories, of course, but even those provide limited answers at best: Porn use is a common vector for malware, but that is a fairly universal behavior -- certainly not limited to Tampa or Salt Lake City. Population growth is another, but then while the south is generally attracting more residents, the growth rates are nothing close to the 300% to 500% growth spurts seen in malware.

Weather, though, now *that* is something to which everyone can relate; no advanced degree in computer science necessary here. People stay home when it snows or storms, and providing

their electricity doesn't go out, they usually go online, in droves—where they run into trouble.

Here is what EnigmaSoftware.com found during Winter Storm Juno for example.

- Computer infections in New York City were up a whopping 93% over typical rates on the first day of the storm;
- Infections in Pennsylvania skyrocketed 91% higher than usual rates
- Infections in all of Massachusetts were up 46%
- Computer infections in Boston were up 41% over typical rates
- Infections throughout all of New York state were up 86%
- Infections in New Jersey were up 71% over typical rates
- Infections in Rhode Island were up 55%
- Infections in Connecticut were up 37%
- Infections in Maine were up 52%

"People are often surprised at how much we don't know about the whys and whens of malware," Morganelli says. "So it's nice to have at least one certainty you can count on."

**This article is published as part of the IDG Contributor Network. [Want to Join?](#)**

Related: [Security](#)

---

*Erika Morphy has been writing about tech for more than twenty years.*

Follow      

**IT buyer's guide to business laptops**


## YOU MIGHT LIKE

---

## SHOP TECH PRODUCTS AT AMAZON

---

**COMPUTERWORLD**  
FROM IDG

FOLLOW US     

**BROWSERS   CLOUD COMPUTING   COMPUTER HARDWARE  
CONSUMERIZATION OF IT   DATA CENTERS  
EMERGING TECHNOLOGY   IT LEADERSHIP   INTERNET   MOBILE  
NETWORKING   OPERATING SYSTEMS   SECURITY   SOFTWARE  
VERTICAL INDUSTRIES**

[News](#)   [Features](#)   [Reviews](#)   [Blogs](#)   [Opinions](#)   [Insider](#)   [Shark Tank](#)   [Slideshows](#)   [Video](#)   [Newsletters](#)  
[Computerworld Events](#)   [Resources/White Papers](#)

[ABOUT US](#) | [CONTACT](#) | [PRIVACY POLICIES](#) | [EDITORIAL BEATS](#) | [ADVERTISING](#) | [CAREERS AT IDG](#) |  
[AD CHOICES](#) | [E-COMMERCE AFFILIATE RELATIONSHIPS](#)

[Copyright](#) © 2018 IDG Communications, Inc.

Explore the IDG Network ▼