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City of San Diego Receives Grant to Develop New Regional Cyber Lab

CITY JOINING FORCES WITH LOCAL EXPERTS, ACADEMICS AND BUSINESS LEADERS TO PREVENT & MINIMIZE CYBERATTACKS; LAB TO LAUNCH EARLY NEXT YEAR

SAN DIEGO – With cybersecurity concerns on the rise following several major ransomware attacks nationwide, the City of San Diego today announced it has received federal grant funding to develop a new San Diego Regional Cyber Lab to help local agencies prevent and protect against cyberattacks.

The Cyber Lab will provide the greater San Diego region with coordinated cybersecurity awareness through collaborative access to tools, intelligence, and a trained and capable workforce. The goal is to enhance cybersecurity resilience through timely sharing of information and analysis, and specialized training with safe environments to simulate and defend against cyberattacks.

“With cybersecurity threats becoming more frequent and sophisticated, we must make sure we’re doing everything we can to stop these attacks in their tracks,” said Mayor Todd Gloria. “The new Cyber Lab will serve as a regional resource where information and prevention strategies can be securely shared between agencies, especially with smaller agencies that don’t have in-house expertise. This will help keep our region’s cyber presence safe and secure.”

Cyber crime has soared in recent years with an estimated \$6 trillion in damages in 2021, according to industry expert Cybersecurity Ventures. There have also been several recent attacks on San Diego’s local agencies and institutions, including Scripps Health, the Port of San Diego, the City of San Marcos and UC San Diego Health.

The City received two grants from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security totaling about \$928,000 to develop a project management plan for the San Diego Regional Cyber Lab, which includes:

- Collaborative information-sharing for alerts of malicious activity and emerging threats.
- An online database of digital documents providing best practices for cybersecurity.
- A training environment, including both virtual and physical lab space.
- A new website with tips and resources.

The City has formed a working group to develop the Cyber Lab with the goal of opening in early 2022. The group consists of cybersecurity experts, academics, local CEOs and public officials from across the San Diego region.

“There have been a number of high-profile attacks that have crippled companies and public agencies, costing them millions in lost productivity or ransoms,” said Darren Bennett, the City’s Chief Information Security Officer. “We must remain vigilant in defending against these ever-evolving threats and, with this new collaboration, we’ll be stronger as a region by working together against a common enemy.”

The cybersecurity industry has never been more important with the COVID-19 pandemic forcing many employers, including the City of San Diego, to create remote workforces and operate off cloud-based platforms.

“A new regional resource to help in the fight against cyberattacks is needed now more than ever as threats continue to rise across the globe,” said Lisa Easterly, President and CEO of San Diego-based Cyber Center of Excellence. “These attacks threaten to cripple businesses, hold cities hostage for ransom and disrupt our way of life. We stand a much better chance of minimizing those threats when we are united in our defense against them.”

In the first nine months of 2020, the total number of records exposed through breaches was a staggering 36 billion, according to a [report by RiskBased Security](#). Another [report by IBM Security](#) found the average cost of a data breach was \$3.86 million as of 2020.

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