

Atenas Resident Caught in Bank Scam

You receive an email labeled “Aviso Importante de Banco Nacional” (important notice from the Banco Nacional). You open the email and see the Banco Nacional logo, and below it a message in Spanish. Even if your Spanish is rudimentary, you understand that the bank wants you to verify your account, and that you are supposed to click on the box provided. To encourage you to do this, the message says that if you do not verify your account within 24 hours, your computer access to your account will be cut off.

Maybe you are a little suspicious, but you click on the box just to learn more. The screen that comes up is identical to the log-in page that you normally see when you do your internet banking. There is the logo, the long message in Spanish warning you about internet security, and the boxes on the side to put in your account number and password. There is even a new warning saying “NO CAIGA EN LA TRAMPA” (don’t fall into the trap). You log in like you always do.

The screen flashes and the same page appears again. You think your first entries got lost in cyber space, so you reenter them. This time your account information comes up, like it always does. There is nothing for you to verify. “Well,” you think, “I guess there is no problem,” and you forget about it.

This all happens on Wednesday, June 6. On Saturday, June 9, you log onto your account again, and to your astonishment, your bank balance is only \$17. Frantically you print out a list of all recent transactions. To your consternation you see that at 1:30 am on Saturday morning all the money from your savings account was transferred to your checking account, and then all but \$17 of that money was transferred to someone else’s account. It is the weekend, so you have to wait until Monday to go to the bank to investigate. That is when you learn that your money was in that other person’s account for only 8 minutes before being transferred somewhere else. Your money is gone.

You are the victim of an elaborate internet scam called “phishing.” The thief “fishes” for your account information and then uses it to rob you. This exact thing happened last week to a reader of Atenas Today. We all owe this person a debt of gratitude for reporting it so that others can be warned. You can see how easy it would be to get caught in this trap. Never give your financial information on a website that you have accessed through a link from another website. You may not be on the site you think you are.

As of this writing, the person who lost his money is working with the police and the Banco Nacional, and he has been led to believe that he will get his money back. If he does, it will be a good endorsement for keeping your money in the Banco Nacional. Atenas Today will continue to follow this story.

The phishing is still going on. Just yesterday, June 11, the person who lost his money got the same email again.