# Emotet malware strikes U.S. businesses with COVID-19 spam

By Lawrence Abrams

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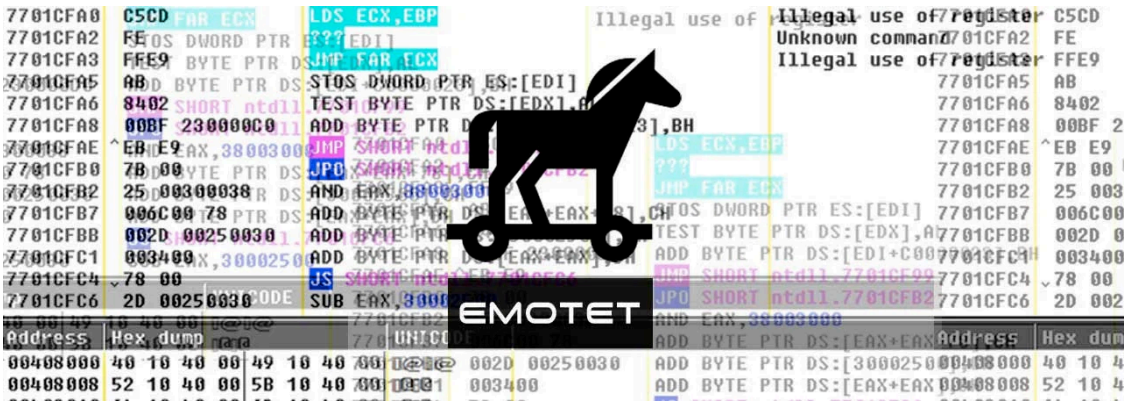
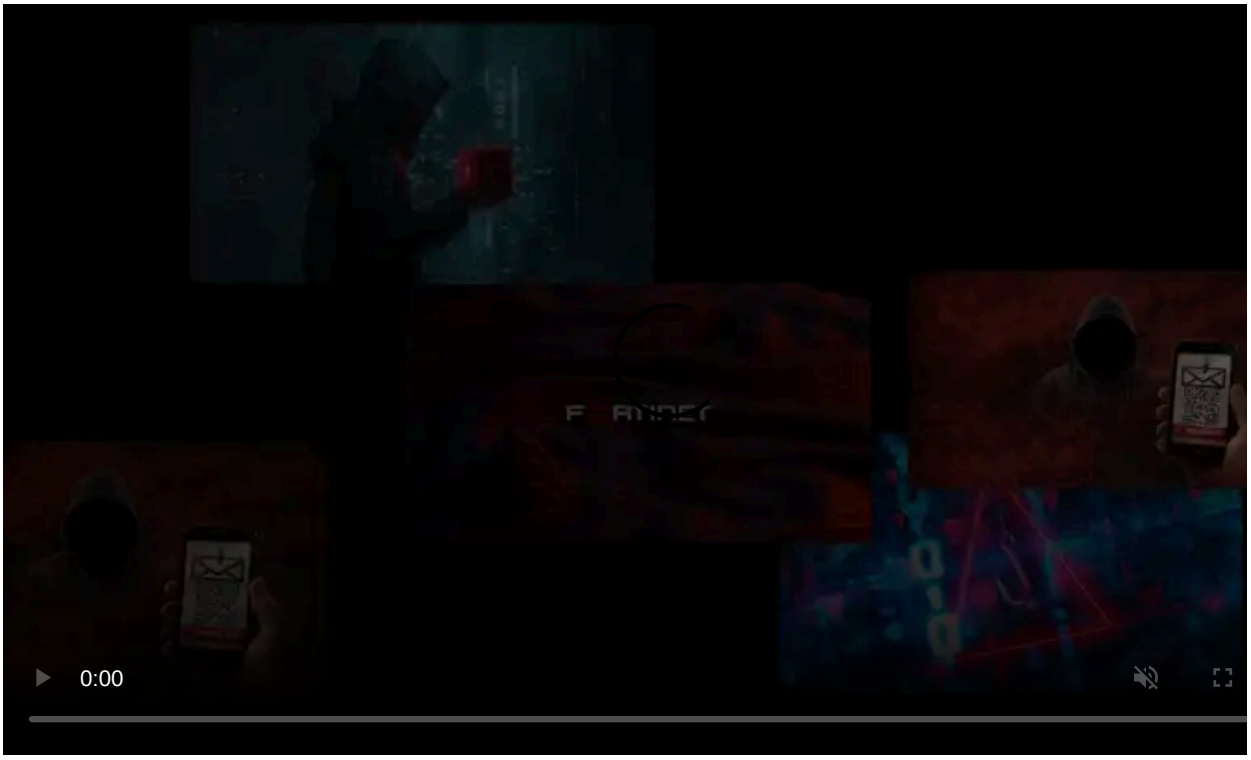



The Emotet malware has begun to spam COVID-19 related emails to U.S. businesses after not being active for most of the USA pandemic.

Before going dark on Feb 7th, 2020, the Emotet malware was commonly spamming COVID-19 themed spam to distribute malware in other countries already affected by the pandemic.

As the start of the USA's pandemic was around March, Emotet never had the chance to target U.S. businesses with COVID-19 related spam.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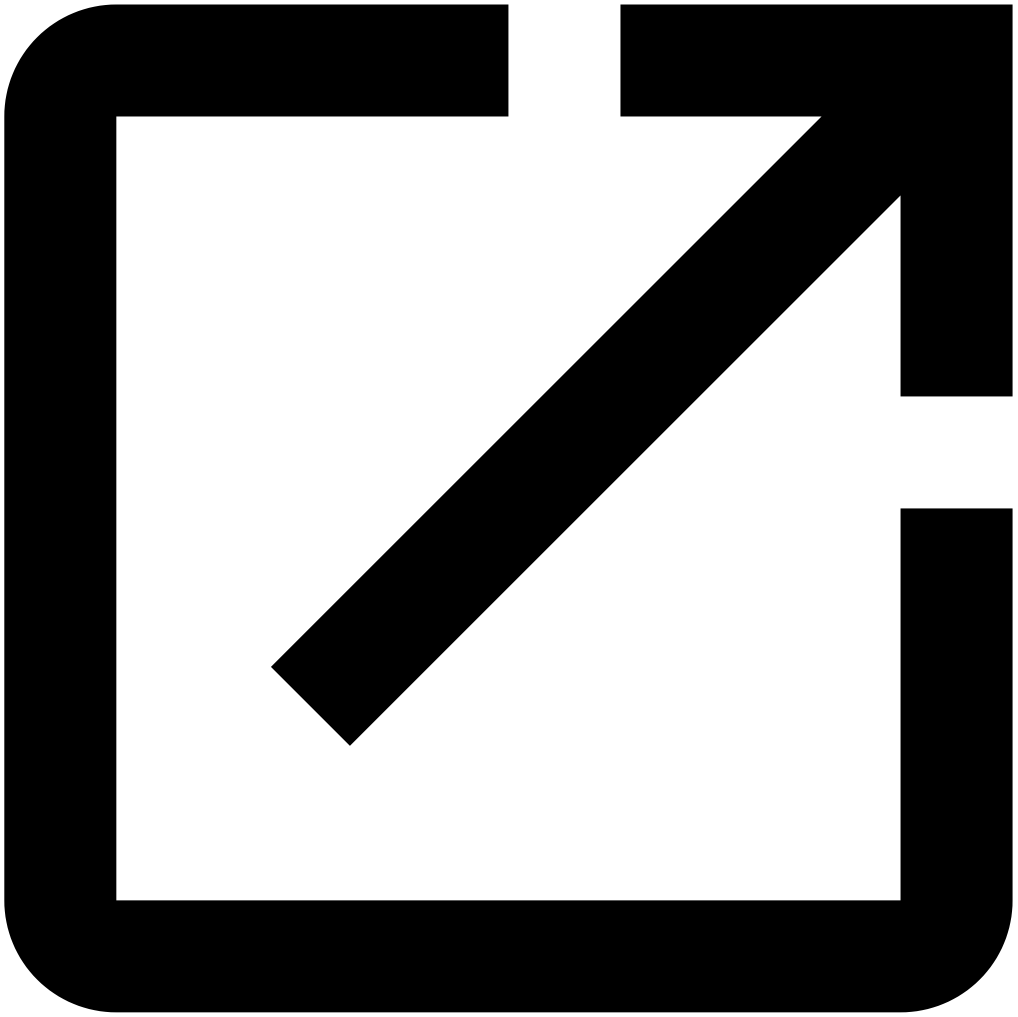
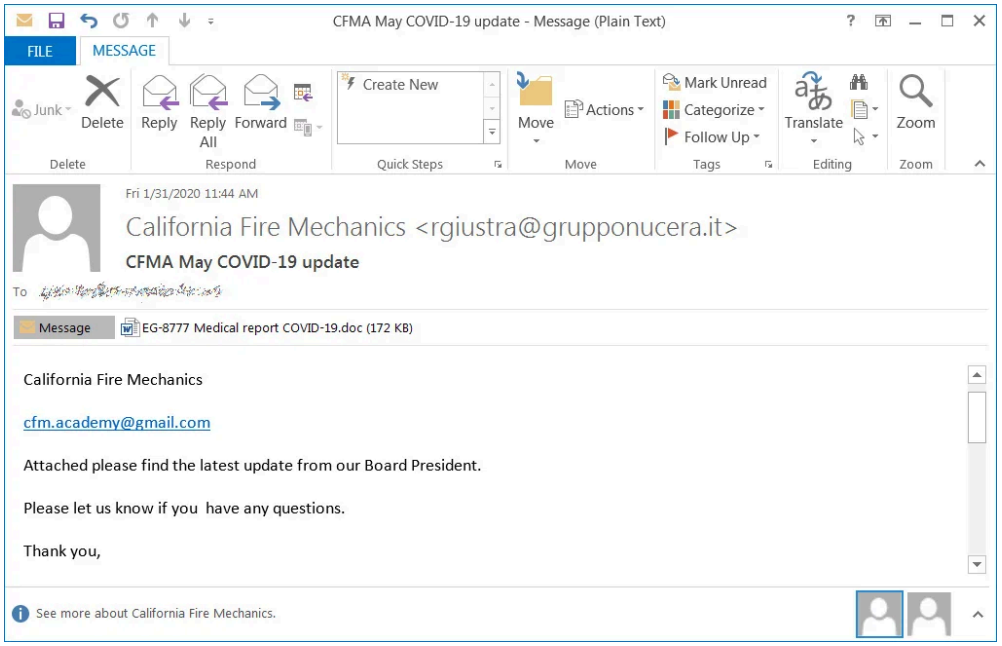


With Emotet's back in full swing again after awakening on July 17th, 2020, Emotet has started spewing out COVID-19 spam, and this time it's is now targeting users in the USA.

## COVID-19 Emotet spam now targeting U.S. orgs

In a new spam email discovered by security researcher Fate112, Emotet has been sending out a stolen email that pretends to be from the 'California Fire Mechanics' sending a 'May COVID-19 update'.

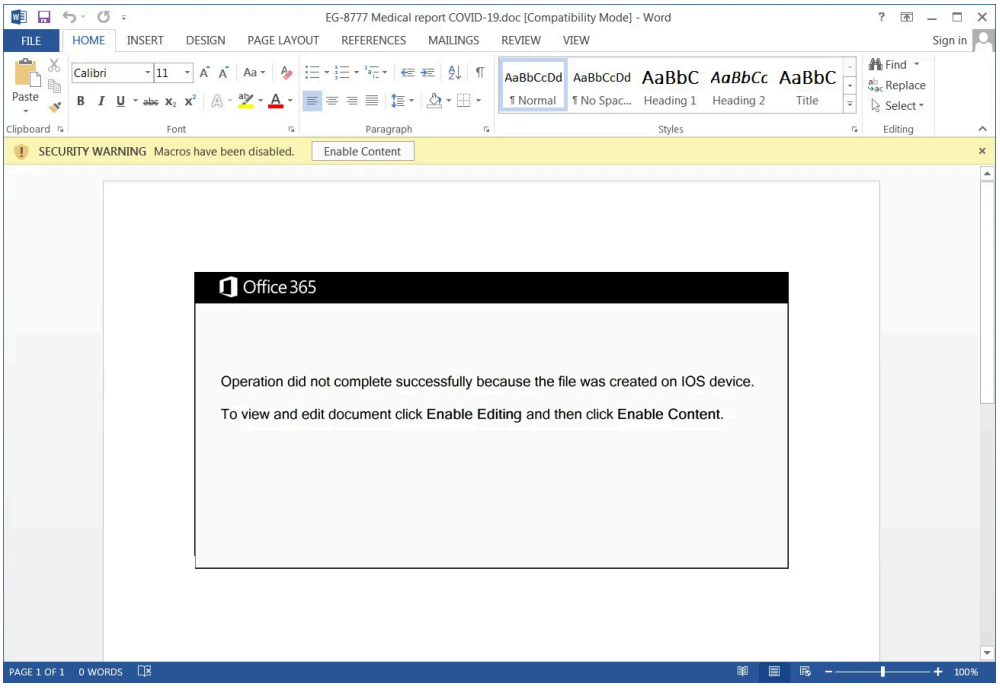



**COVID-19 themed Emotet spam**

This email is not a template created by the Emotet actors, but rather an email stolen from an existing victim and adopted into the malware's spam campaigns.

Attached to the email is a malicious attachment titled 'EG-8777 Medical report COVID-19.doc', which uses a generic document template used in previous campaigns.

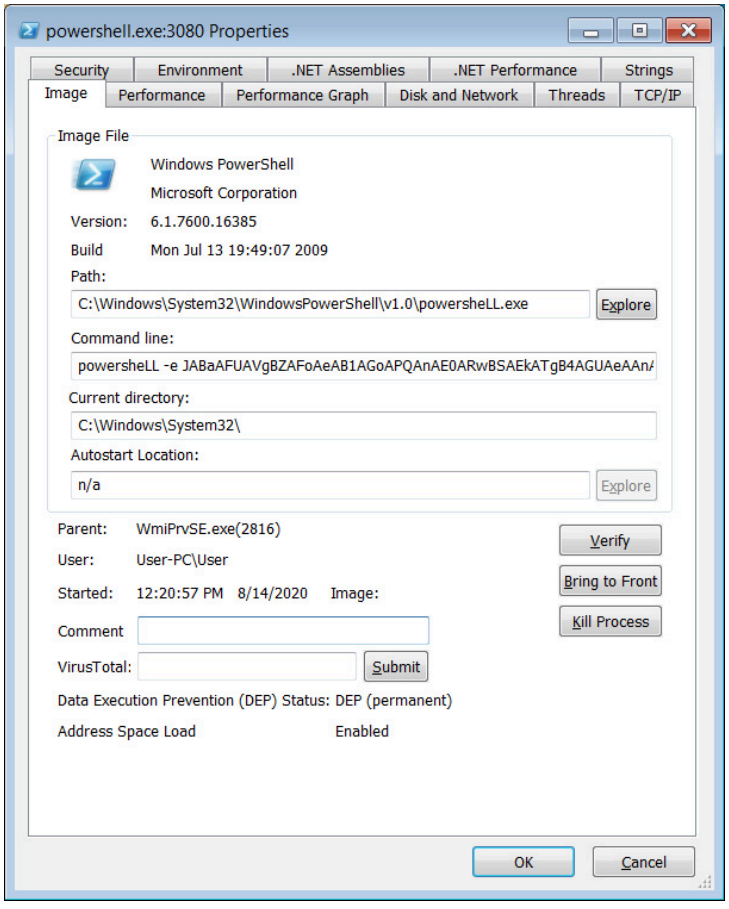
This template pretends to be created from an iOS device and requires users to click on 'Enable Content' to view it properly.




**Malicious Emotet document**

Once a user clicks on the 'Enable Content' button, a PowerShell command will be executed that downloads the Emotet malware executable from one of three to four sites.

In this particular campaign, when downloaded, Emotet will be saved to the %UserProfile% folder and named as a three-digit number, such as 498.exe.




**Malicious PowerShell command**

Once executed, a victim's computer will become part of the malware bot operation and spam out further malicious email.

Ultimately, Emotet will download and install other malware such as Qbot or TrickBot, which will be used to steal your data, passwords, and potentially lead to ransomware deployment.

In a conversation with Emotet expert Joseph Roosen, BleepingComputer was told that other COVID-19 campaigns have recently been seen using reply-chain emails.

"So far we have only seen it as part of stolen reply chain emails. We have not seen it as a generic template yet but I am sure it is just around the corner hehe. There was one reply chain I saw yesterday that was sent to 100s of addresses that was referring to the closing of an organization because of covid-19. I would not be surprised if Ivan is filtering some of those reply chains to focus on ones that are involving covid-19," Roosen told BleepingComputer.

Ivan is Roosen's nickname for the Russian Emotet-malware operators.

Email security firm Cofense also told BleepingComputer that they have been seeing COVID-19 related spam recently that uses attachments named "COVID-19 report 08 12.doc" and similar.

Cofense states that the document date will change to the day of the campaign.

As Emotet is such a dangerous malware that can lead to a variety of risks, all home and corporate users must be cautious about opening documents that require you to 'Enable Content.'

If you receive these types of emails, first scan the attachment with an antivirus scanner to make sure it is safe to open. Even then, you should proceed with caution.

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