Abstract

(Session 4) Cybersecurity in Ports Shipping

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Learnings from Port of Seattle Recent Cyber Attack

Founded in 1911 by a vote of the people as a special purpose government, the Port of Seattle's mission is to promote economic opportunities and quality of life in the region by advancing trade, travel, commerce, and job creation in an equitable, accountable, and environmentally responsible manner.

The Port has four primary lines of business: Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA), commercial fishing and recreational boating at its public marinas, cruise, and marine cargo (in partnership with the Port of Tacoma as the Northwest Seaport Alliance). The Port of Seattle's 2023 economic impacts total more than 204,500 jobs, $12.6 billion in total compensation, and nearly $39 billion in business output.

On August 24, 2024, the Port identified system outages consistent with a cyberattack. The Port promptly initiated its incident response processes. Their teams isolated critical systems, took certain systems offline, and worked with third-party and federal partners to safely restore and test their systems.

Importantly, at no point did this incident affect the ability to safely travel to or from Seattle-Tacoma International Airport or safely use the Port's maritime facilities. The proprietary systems of their major airline and cruise partners were not affected, nor were the systems of their federal partners like the Federal Aviation Administration, Transportation Security Administration, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

An investigation assisted by cybersecurity and technology experts was initiated to investigate what happened and what data and stakeholders may have been impacted. The Port notified impacted parties, along with law enforcement, and worked to add further protections to harden its systems.

Matt will share about the Port's immediate response to this recent cyber attack, rebuilding efforts to build back systems stronger, and include lessons learned for other port authorities.