

# Oil industry prime target for hackers, technology experts caution

BY KELLY CRYDERMAN, CALGARY HERALD AUGUST 4, 2011



Greg Stringham is the vice-president, oilsands and markets, for Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

**Photograph by:** Gavin Young, Calgary Herald

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Alberta is no more or less susceptible to high-tech attacks than anywhere else, but it is home to some particularly prized targets, says a Calgary-based cybersecurity specialist.

"I would say there are a number of high-value targets in the province," said Andrew Ginter, director of industrial security for Waterfall Security Solutions.

"Those targets are clearly in the oil and gas sector."

Ginter was commenting following the release of a McAfee report detailing the activities of a sophisticated international hacking scheme that targeted 72 companies, governments, non-profit organizations and the United Nations over the past five years.

The security company's report also said the attack affected two unnamed Canadian government agencies, an unnamed Canadian information technology company and the Montreal-based World Anti-Doping Agency.

The McAfee report noted another long-term cyberattack, nicknamed Night Dragon, which targeted oil and gas companies and came to light in the U.S. earlier this year.

Ginter, whose company provides security for industry and critical infrastructure systems around the world, said most big oil and gas companies have solid security systems. But it's a constant and evolving concern.

"There are no silver bullets," he said.

At the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, Greg Stringham said industry members are paying attention. Information technology officials regularly get together to discuss emerging trends and issues, he said.

As for the Alberta government, it has heard repeated calls from the province's auditor general that its security measures need beefing up.

Service Alberta, the responsible department, created a Corporate Information Security Office following the auditor general's first recommendations in 2008.

It also implemented security standards that would "reasonably protect government information assets if properly implemented and consistently followed," according to the province's auditor general.

But on Wednesday, auditor general Merwan Saher said he still hasn't been provided with final confirmation that Service Alberta ensures the security directives are consistently followed.

"It's a huge issue," Saher said. "The government is the custodian of huge amounts of personal information, and corporate information."

Service Alberta spokesman Mike Berezowsky said the Alberta government hasn't detected suspicious activities that would suggest it had been targeted by attacks similar to those outlined by the McAfee report.

He said Service Alberta does yearly reviews of departmental security plans, and they must reflect government policy.

"We are continually assessing risk," Berezowsky said.

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