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## Just in time for summer, a slacker virus

By **Stephen Rynkiewicz**

Tribune staff reporter

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Computer viruses continue to thwart the best efforts of technology-network administrators. The latest mutation needs only one bonehead move to clog e-mail systems with messages titled "Re: Application," "Re: Movie" and the like.

And there seem to be no dearth of boneheads to open files labeled "Re: Movie" at work. The virus propagates through one of the few types of files that email-network security programs doesn't automatically strip out: compressed .zip files used in the corporate world to send big documents.

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Several makers of virus-scrubbing software this week found the irritating but otherwise benign variant of the Sobig computer "worm," then upgraded its threat level as it spread rapidly.

"It takes only one Gomer sitting in the corner to wipe out the network," said Patrick Hinojosa, chief U.S. technology officer for Panda Software in Glendale, Calif.

And co-workers as well: Hinojosa says 2.5 percent of computers that ran the Spain-based company's online virus check now are infected with Sobig.E, largely because the worm creatively mimics the names of co-workers, brand-name companies and technical-support addresses.

Tips in squashing the worm:

- Don't open unsolicited files. A "Movie" that purports to come from Microsoft tech support likely is a virus, not a Steve Ballmer tirade.
- Use automatically updating virus software. Major manufacturers like Symantec and Network Associates have updated their programs to detect and remove the worm. Adventuresome computer users can search their hard drives for and delete the file W32.Sobig.E@mm.