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November 13th, 2023

Dear Bladen County Community,

Bladen County Government has unfortunately become the victim of a cybercriminal attack. Last week, we discovered irregularities in our systems. Bladen County IT staff immediately retained the services of the North Carolina Joint Cybersecurity Task Force, a team of outside experts from the NC National Guard, the NCLGISA Cybersecurity Strike Team, NC Emergency Management, and NC Department of IT, to launch a forensic investigation and help secure our servers.

It is important to share that our County has emergency preparedness plans specifically for situations like these and at no time did any life safety services cease to operate. We followed our contingency plan and all emergency services have been fully operational throughout the incident. Our dedicated IT professionals are working diligently with some of the country's leading experts in cybersecurity to return Bladen County Government systems back to normal as quickly as possible, and they are making incredible progress.

Based on the preliminary investigation, the malicious activity performed by cybercriminals on our county network was designed to access our systems and the data contained within those systems. We can confirm the criminals were able to access some of the County's data.

We are operating Bladen County Government under normal hours, but with limited capacity, as we will not have access to all county systems. Most of the county systems that rely on internal servers or access to the Internet will be impacted, but county staff has contingency plans for utilizing alternative methods to transact public business. No systems relating to state or other levels of government appear to have been impacted.

While more information will be confirmed in the coming days, understand that our priority is the safety and security of the Bladen County community. We are committed to addressing the situation quickly and responsibly, by collaborating with legal counsel, technical experts, and cyber-security professionals. We appreciate your patience as we work to resolve this issue.

Sincerely,

Rodney Hester

Chairman of Bladen County Board of Commissioners