

Police: Ashley Madison hack might have led to suicides

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Toronto: The hack of the cheating website Ashley Madison has triggered extortion crimes and led to two unconfirmed reports of suicides, Canadian police said Monday.

The company behind Ashley Madison is offering a \$500,000 Canadian (US \$378,000) reward for information leading to the arrest of members of a group that hacked the site.

Hackers last week released detailed records on millions of people registered with the website, a month after a break-in at Ashley Madison's parent company, Toronto-based Avid Life Media Inc. The website, whose slogan is, "Life is short. Have an affair," is marketed to facilitate extramarital affairs.

Toronto Police acting staff-Supt. Bryce Evans said the hack is having an "enormous social and economic fallout."

"This hack is one of the largest data breaches in the world," Evans said.

"This is affecting all of us. The social impact behind this leak, we're talking about families, we're talking about children, we're talking about wives, their male partners."

The hackers who took responsibility for the break-in had accused the website's owners of deceit and incompetence, and said the company refused to bow to their demands to close the site. The hackers referred to themselves as the Impact Team.

Evans said the hackers released the entire Ashley Madison client list, which claims more than 30 million users worldwide. He said the hackers also sent a taunting message to the company CEO and released his emails.

Evans said there are confirmed cases of criminals attempting to extort Ashley Madison clients by threatening to expose them unless payment is received.

The police official did not offer further details of the unconfirmed suicides. He also said hate crimes may be connected to the hack but did not provide details.

Evans addressed the hackers directly, saying their actions are "illegal and will not be tolerated."

"This is your wake-up call," he said.

A representative of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security attended the news conference.

Special Agent Ron Marcello of Homeland Security Investigations said Toronto police asked for assistance and said the FBI is the lead on investigating the hack.

U.S. government employees with sensitive jobs in national security or law enforcement were among hundreds of federal workers found to be using government networks to access and pay membership fees to Ashley Madison, The Associated Press reported last week.

"This is worldwide," Evans said. "We're looking at bringing in top security investigators from around the

world to assist.â€•

- AP