

## AOL's WebMailUI (Web based email) generates improperly formatted date strings in the Received: line.

I've noted this problem going back to at least January of 2015, but I suspect that it goes back further. My first documented instance was reported to SpamCop forums in January of 2015: <http://forum.spamcop.net/forums/topic/14694-cant-parse-date-of-spam-for-age-detection-aol-webmailui/>

AOL's improper application of the standardized date format, makes it difficult to fight spam. I spend several hours a year tracking, parsing, evaluating, analyzing, reporting, mitigating - spam! It's a dirty job but someone's gotta do it. The job isn't all that difficult, but reading email headers isn't all that easy. Especially when the spammers do everything they can to obfuscate and complicate things.

What helps is a clear understanding of the 'rules' for internet messages. That's why there are rules like RFC5322: <http://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc5322>. This internet standard, created and published by the Internet Engineering Task Force. This particular document (RFC5322) specifies the Internet Message Format for email sent between computer users. This specification is the most recent/current standard which all email providers, engineers and ISPs should be using when they generate, send and receive email messages.

```
Source of re: Terina, this my name
Return-Path: <crfn.mullaly1@aol.com>
Received: from core-anb05a.mail.aol.com (core-anb05a.mail.aol.com [172.27.0.15])
 by mtaomg-mcc02.mx.aol.com (OMAG/Core Interface) with ESMTSP id CC5E238000004
 for <vaessenrobert@aol.com>; Fri, 6 Mar 2015 19:31:22 -0500 (EST)
Received: from 186.93.161.237 by webprd-m53.mail.aol.com (10.74.5.48) with HTTP
(WebMailUI); 2015-Mar-07 00:31:22
Date: Fri, 6 Mar 2015 19:31:22 -0500
From: Crfn Mullaly <crfn.mullaly1@aol.com>
To: vaessenrobert@aol.com
Message-Id: <14bf1a4c658-4132-4d4c@webprd-m53.mail.aol.com>
Subject: re: Terina, this my name
MIME-Version: 1.0
Content-Type: multipart/alternative;
 boundary="-----_Part_21966_1631550736.1425688282709"
X-MB-Message-Source: WebUI
X-MB-Message-Type: User
X-Mailer: JAS AOLApp/3.1.3.1-Mac OS X (iPhone)
X-Originating-IP: [186.93.161.237]
x-aol-global-disposition: 5
X-SPAM-FLAG: YES
DKIM-Signature: v=1; a=rsa-sha256; c=relaxed/relaxed; d=mx.aol.com;
 s=20140625; t=1425688282;
 bh=ma1c1hEFPcvA2CU/CxagZr8A7k04pvTiC+UUsilVyhW=;
 h=From:To:Subject:Message-Id:Date:MIME-Version:Content-Type;
 b=RBM595iyCGlV4/Yfw08UDrjM2N6wNa0CwPYuwoXR0PCg/vNDxfAnU5RA+Rjg6sJQ
 9mucJ3FjxIaltIf/0LganbC1RuK0rcW0SEzmowxAljp4lyYlNn31fmd/lfyXfx389;
 wncntsXhyVnrg94I14HuH9c1Y8fpZakk730jHZVM=
X-AOL-REROUTE: YES
x-aol-sid: 3039ac1afd5054fa46da250e
-----_Part_21966_1631550736.1425688282709
Content-Type: text/plain; charset=utf-8
Content-Transfer-Encoding: quoted-printable

I of several of your current acquaintances offered me your own email and also
advised me to connect with you.
I'd been feeling lonesome and also chose that perhaps I would hit up my bud-
dies and find out who is up for a lot of fun.
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What doesn't help are companies like that fail to follow the standards. AOL's web-based email interface (WebMailUI) is one example where the standard is not followed. The WebMailUI applies an improper format to the outgoing messages generated by users. The date format it is applying appear in the messages 'Received:' line in the following format: yyyy-mmm-dd. For example: a recent test message included the following 'Received:' line:

*"Received: from 67.173.230.210 by webstg-a06.mail.aol.com (10.72.16.205) with HTTP (WebMailUI); 2015-Mar-07 14:39:08"*

(This sample comes from a test message I sent to myself. See the sample at right for an example from a spam message I received)

This format: 'yyyy-mmm-dd' does NOT conform to the RFC standard: 'dd-mmm-yyyy'. As a result, automated parsing software (such as that used by SpamCop) will fail to recognize the date as a valid string.

Not only does this make it difficult for other software developers to create functional

software, scripting and email applications; it also makes it easier for Spammers to flood your inbox with unwanted crap!

I am reporting this problem to AOL in as many channels as I can find/access, in the hopes that AOL will push out some updates to their web based services and correct this problem wherever it might exist. Please correct this non conformance issue in order to help reduce the occurrence of spam on your network, to facilitate the reporting of spam that slips through your filters, and to bring your software/code into compliance with the accepted/established standards for the exchange of electronic messages.

AOL Fix this problem.

Rob of Rob's World! - a long time spam fighter: <http://www.robsworld.org/index2.html#fightingspam>