

Hackers deliver message to WSU
Guy Fawkes-inspired video played in many classrooms ensures Nov.5 will be remembered

By Kelsey Husky Daily News Staff Writer

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Steven Forge - State Farm

Some Washington State University students are certain to "Remember, Remember, the Fifth of November."

Multimedia-capable classrooms in Sloan and Todd halls were hacked Friday in such a way that video screens dropped and a 3:43-minute YouTube video played a speech reminiscent of the 2006 movie, "V for Vendetta," which is about a modern-day Guy Fawkes-style plot.

In England, Nov. 5 is known as Guy Fawkes Night, or Bonfire Night, which celebrates the failed Gunpowder Plot of 1605. The effigy of Fawkes is burned on a bonfire, often accompanied by a fireworks display. The Gunpowder Plot was a failed conspiracy by a group of provincial English Catholics, including Guy Fawkes, to assassinate the Protestant King James I of England and VI of Scotland and replace him with a Catholic head of state. Fawkes was left in charge of the gunpowder placed underneath the House of Lords, and was discovered and arrested.

The YouTube video consisted of a person in a black gown and a large black hat, similar to the outfit worn by "V" in the movie. The distorted voice spoke of squirrels. According to a transcript on the hackers' website, www.WSU1812.com: "They, with their beady little eyes and mamilian [sic] faces, who have come to Pullman merely to eat, drink, and bread [sic]. Truly, it is the squirrels that have infiltrated our once astute university, who run rampant and wild through the lawns in some apparent state of perpetual inebriation."

The hackers said the video would play once an hour until 5 p.m., but it was intercepted before then, said Darin Watkins, executive director of WSU external communications.

Tom Ambrosi, WSU's chief information security officer, said, "We see this as a serious breach of our systems and we are dealing with it as such."

Watkins said most people affected regarded the hack as a big annoyance and disruption rather than a threat, but that one faculty member who researched Fawkes was fairly upset.

"It freaked her out," Watkins said. "I'll be honest with you."

He said he's been fielding calls all day, even from students, who wanted to know how this sort of intrusion is possible. WSU police have launched an investigation.

The biggest issue with the hack, Watkins said, was that there was system damage. Information Technology Services will be working all weekend to make repairs and ensure classroom technologies are fully functioning by Monday, he said. Some students taking online classes through the distance learning program were also affected.

Cyber crime is a serious matter, Watkins said.

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