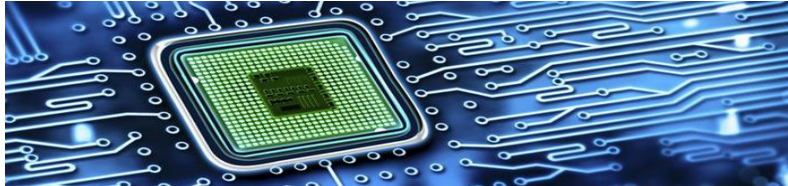## The Global Chip Shortage Is Starting To Have Major Real-world Consequences

The severity of the global chip shortage has gone up a notch over the last few weeks and it's now looking as though millions of people will be impacted. As technology has advanced, semiconductor chips have spread from computers and cars to toothbrushes and tumble dryers — they now lurk beneath the hood of a surprising number of products. But demand for chips is continuing to outstrip supply, and car makers are no longer the only companies feeling the pinch.

Alan Priestley, an analyst at Gartner, told CNBC that the average person on the street is bound to be impacted by the chip shortage in one form or another. "What it will mean is they can't get something, or prices are slightly higher," Priestley said. South Korean tech giant Samsung said last week that the chip shortage is hitting television and appliance production. Samsung's co-chief executive and mobile chief, Koh Dong-jin, said at a shareholder meeting in March that there's a serious imbalance in supply and demand of chips in the IT sector. At the time, the company said it might skip the launch of the next Galaxy Note smartphone.

Production of low-margin processors, such as those used to weigh clothes in a washing machine or toast bread in a smart toaster, has also been hit. While most retailers are still able to get their hands on these products at the moment, they may face issues in the months ahead. Many companies — particularly those in China who have been hit by sanctions — are boosting their stockpiles of in-demand chips to try to ride out the storm, but that's making chips even harder to get hold of for other firms.

The automotive sector, which relies on chips for everything from the computer management of engines to driver assistance systems, is still the hardest hit. Companies like Ford, Volkswagen and Jaguar Land Rover have shut down factories, laid off workers and slashed vehicle production. Rental car companies are also feeling the effects as they're unable to buy the new vehicles they want. Hertz and Enterprise, which have traditionally profited from buying new vehicles in bulk and renting them out, have reportedly resorted to buying used cars at auction instead.

The chief executive of German chipmaker Infineon said Tuesday that the semiconductor industry is in unchartered territory. Ploss said it is "very clear it will take time" until supply and demand are rebalanced. "I think two years is too long, but we will definitely see it reaching out to 2022," he said. "I think additional capacity is going to come … I expect a more balanced situation in the next calendar year." Ramping up production takes time. "You can't suddenly go to a chip vendor and say, 'give me a million new chips' if you haven't got the order in place because there's a throughput time," said Priestley, who works in Gartner's technology and service provider research team. "If I put an order in today, and there's capacity available, it may take me three months or more to get the chip." He added that most consumer products have extended supply chains and "we haven't started to see the impact" of the chip shortage in some areas. "If Apple builds a new phone today, they may not ship until end of the year," said Priestley.

Meanwhile, the issue in the automotive industry is being compounded because the car manufacturers don't use the most advanced — or bleeding edge — chips, according to Priestley. "They tend to use chips that are made on older manufacturing processes and the chip companies are obviously moving towards using the higher-revenue bleeding edge products, and they're not investing in your capacity on the older processes," he said.

Nations are now being forced to think about how they can increase the number of chips they produce. The vast majority of the world's chips are made in China, while the U.S. is the second biggest producer. The European Commission, the executive arm of the EU, has said it wants to build up chip manufacturing capacity in Europe as part of an effort to become more self-reliant on what it sees as a critical technology. Europe currently accounts for less than 10% of global chip production, although that is up from 6% five years ago. It wants to boost that figure to 20% and is exploring investing 20-30 billion euros ($24-36 billion) to make it happen. U.S. tech giant Intel has offered to help but it reportedly wants 8 billion euros in public subsidies toward building a semiconductor factory in Europe. Pat Gelsinger, Intel's CEO, met with two EU commissioners in Brussels. "What we're asking from both the U.S. and the European governments is to make it competitive for us to do it here compared to in Asia," Gelsinger told Politico Europe in an interview. Intel also announced in March that it intends to spend $20 billion on two new chip plants in Arizona. "It's going to take two or three years before we start to see that," said Gartner's Priestley. "But that's really looking to meet future demand."

US Passes Emergency Waiver Over Fuel Pipeline Cyber-attack

Colonial Pipeline system map

The US government issued emergency legislation on Sunday after the largest fuel pipeline in the US was hit by a ransomware cyber-attack. The Colonial Pipeline carries 2.5 million barrels a day - 45% of the East Coast's supply of diesel, petrol and jet fuel. The operator took itself offline on Friday after the cyber-attack and work to restore service is continuing.The US government has relaxed rules on fuel being transported by road. It means drivers in 18 states can work extra or more flexible hours when transporting refined petroleum products.

US fuel prices at the pump were largely unaffected on Monday, but there are fears that could change if the shutdown is prolonged. Independent oil market analyst Gaurav Sharma told the BBC a lot of fuel was now stranded at refineries in Texas. "Unless they sort it out by Tuesday, they're in big trouble," said Mr Sharma. "The first areas to be hit would be Atlanta and Tennessee, then the domino effect goes up to New York."

He said oil futures traders were now "scrambling" to meet demand, at a time when US inventories are declining, and demand - especially for fuel for cars - is on the rise as consumers return to the roads and the economy recovers.

The temporary waiver issued by the Department of Transportation enables oil products to be shipped in tankers up to New York, but this would not be anywhere near enough to match the pipeline's capacity, Mr Sharma warned.

Sources said the ransomware attack was likely to have been caused by a cyber-criminal gang called DarkSide, who infiltrated Colonial's network and locked the data on some computers and servers, demanding a ransom on Friday.

The gang tried to take almost 100 gigabytes of data hostage, threatening to leak it onto the internet, but the FBI and other government agencies worked with private companies to respond. The cloud computing system the hackers used to collect the stolen data was taken offline on Saturday, Reuters reported.
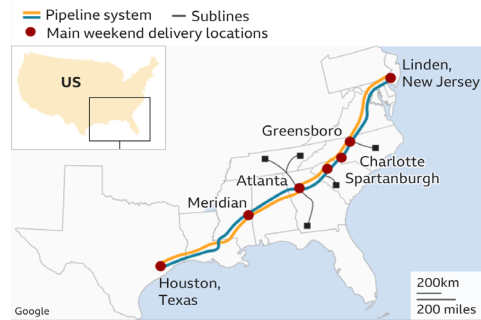
Colonial's data did not appear to have been transferred from that system anywhere else, potentially limiting the hackers' leverage to extort or further embarrass the company, the news agency said.

On Sunday, Colonial said that although its four main pipelines remain offline, some smaller lines between terminals and delivery points were now operational.

"Quickly after learning of the attack, Colonial proactively took certain systems offline to contain the threat. These actions temporarily halted all pipeline operations and affected some of our IT systems, which we are actively in the process of restoring," the firm said.

It added it would bring its full system back online "only when we believe it is safe to do so, and in full compliance with the approval of all federal regulations".

The incident highlights the risk ransomware can pose to critical national industrial infrastructure, not just businesses.

In addition to a notice on their computer screens, victims of a DarkSide attack receive an information pack informing them that their computers and servers are encrypted.

The gang lists all the types of data it has stolen, and sends victims the URL of a "personal leak page" where the data is already loaded, waiting to be automatically published, should the company or organization not pay before the deadline is up.

DarkSide also tells victims it will provide proof of the data it has obtained, and is prepared to delete all of it from the victim's network.

According to Digital Shadows, a London-based cyber-security firm, DarkSide operates like a business. The gang develops the software used to encrypt and steal data from companies. It then provides ransomware to "affiliates" who pay DarkSide a percentage of their earnings from any successful attacks.

When it released new software in March that could encrypt data faster than before, the gang issued a press release and invited journalists to interview it.

It even has a website on the dark web where it lists all the companies it has hacked and what was stolen, and an "ethics" page where it says which organizations it will not attack.

Digital Shadows said the Colonial attack was helped by the coronavirus pandemic, with more engineers remotely accessing control systems for the pipeline from home.

James Chappell, co-founder of Digital Shadows, said DarkSide could have bought account login details for remote desktop software such as TeamViewer and Microsoft Remote Desktop.

"We're seeing a lot of victims now, this is seriously a big problem," said Mr Chappell.

"The amount of small businesses that are falling victim to this... It's becoming a big problem for the economy globally."

Digital Shadows' research shows the cyber-criminal gang is likely to be based in a Russian-speaking country, as it avoids attacking companies in post-Soviet states including Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

May The 4th Be With You

Believe it or not, the fact that 'May Fourth' sounds similar to 'May the force' is the sole reason why fans of the Star Wars franchise decided that May 4 will be celebrated as Star Wars Day, wishing each other by saying "May the Fourth be with you," instead of "May the Force be with you," like in the movies. The phrase was first used in an article published in The London Evening News back in 1979 and the date was, you guessed it, May 4. This was the day when Margaret Thatcher first took office as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. It was supposed to be a congratulatory advertisement by her political party and it read, "May the Fourth Be with You, Maggie. Congratulations."

Star Wars Day is a day dedicated to the celebration of the Star Wars franchise created by George Lucas in 1977. Back in 2011, the first large organized event took place in Toronto Underground Cinema where fans gathered to play games, show off their costumes, watch screenings of the films, and more. The Walt Disney Company purchased Lucasfilm – the production company responsible for the franchise – in 2012 and has been organizing annual events and celebrations on May 4 every year since.

Star Wars Day was started just by its fans and had nothing to do with either of the companies responsible for the franchise. While May 4 is associated with the Jedi phrase – May the force be with you, May 5 has come to be known as "Revenge of the Fifth" which is a play on Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith. May 5 celebrates that Dark Side or the Sith lords in the Star Wars Universe.

Source: https://gadgets.ndtv.com/entertainment/news/star-wars-day-2020-origin-of-may-the-fourth-be-with-you-interesting-facts-disney-lucasfilm-2222912

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The Great American Cleanup

Every year, Preferred IT Group has sponsored and participated in the Great American Cleanup for Fort Wayne.

The Great American Cleanup® unifies and beautifies communities across the country in a grassroots spring-cleaning movement. Celebrating its 23rd year, the most recent Great American Cleanup created 15,000 opportunities for millions of volunteers to have remarkable results – picking up millions of pounds of litter, cleaning over 100,000 acres of public spaces, and tens of thousands of miles of roadways and shorelines.
The Great American Cleanup began as a litter cleanup initiative designed to aesthetically improve our environment by creating cleaner parks, streetscapes, and public spaces through litter removal and elimination. To this day, community cleanups remain at the very heart of the campaign, and the results are remarkable. In 2019 alone, over 40 million pounds of litter and recyclables were collected by volunteers throughout the country.

Keep America Beautiful strives to motivate more Americans to make informed decisions and take simple everyday actions to clean up, green up, and fix up their local communities through their participation in the Great American Cleanup.

Source: https://kab.org/programs/great-american-cleanup/

FUN FACT!

Sync or sink!

Did you know that your phone can synchronize your contacts, calendar, tasks, notes, and more, with your computer? If your phone and computer have Bluetooth built in, you don't even have to plug anything in. Increasingly through off-site servers and Bluetooth, you have the ability to store key word processing, spreadsheet, PDF and other documents on your phone as well.

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