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## 14,000 E-mail Accounts Accidentally Lost

Hurst, TX (NBC) -- Charter Communications admits it accidentally erased thousands of its customers' e-mail accounts by mistake.

A Charter spokesperson said an accident during routine maintenance deleted 14,000 accounts.

Customers lost all of the information in the deleted accounts, including e-mails, photographs and bills.

Lisa Flood of Hurst said she couldn't believe her computer screen.

"I had about eight folders over here," she said. "And all I have now is just, I have nothing. I have nothing."

Flood said she lost family photos and other information in her e-mail account.

"The pictures, that's a bad deal, like my niece went to Chicago and was playing in the snow. It's gone, you know."

She had also been saving e-mails from her son in college.

"And it's his first year, so he e-mails with important things to tell Mom," Flood said. "And I had been saving them all in a folder, and it's all gone."

The company said there is no way to recover the lost information.

"We're straight out apologizing for this gaffe," Charter spokesman Craig Watson said. "It's never happened to us before. We've put in place an extra fail-safe system so it will never happen again."

Flood said an apology isn't enough.

"I hadn't really started to think about some kind of compensation, but sorry just doesn't get it," she said. "They say they're going to keep it from happening again? How do I have faith in that?"

Charter said it does not currently plan to compensate customers.

Millions of people use Web-based e-mail accounts from providers such as Yahoo, Hotmail, Google.

With such accounts, the e-mails are not stored the customer's computer, but on the Web site's servers.

Experts said people should always back up their e-mail.

Using programs such as Outlook to download e-mail to a computer's hard drive would help.

“Once it’s on a server, if you’ve never ported it over to your computer, there’s not a way for us to get it back as a Geek Squad, or actually anybody in data recovery,” Taylor Morrison of the Geek Squad said.

Watson said the 14,000 accounts that were wiped out are a tiny percentage of Charter’s 2.5 million Internet customers.

NBC

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