What is it? Why am I getting it? Isn't it illegal? Isn't there a Cornell policy? How do I get rid of it?

You get into work in the morning, grab a cup of your preferred beverage, sit down at your computer, and check your email. Suddenly, your inbox is filled to the brim with messages with subjects like "+++ Mortgage Quotes +++", "Re: Your Credit", and " Congrats! You're a winner!!" You don't need a new mortgage, your credit is none of their business, and you don't remember entering any contests. What you do need is to get rid of these messages! You have become a victim of… SPAM.

Questions start running through your head. What is SPAM? Why am I getting it? Isn't it against the law? Doesn't Cornell have a policy about it? How do I get rid of it? How do I keep from getting more?

What is SPAM? Spam is no longer just a luncheon meat, the word is also used to refer to unsolicited commercial email (USE) or junk e-mail. Just a few years ago your email inbox was uncluttered except for messages from friends, coworkers, family, or stuff that you really did want to know about. Unfortunately, Spam is becoming a very annoying but very common part of modern electronic life.

Why am I getting spam? The number of ways a spammer (the person sending the unsolicited email) get your email address keeps growing and growing as the Internet grows. Some of the common ways spammers get a hold of your email address are email links on web pages, newsgroup postings with email addresses in them, and commercial mailing lists that you did sign up for but that may have sold their list. Also, filling out forms on the Internet for contests, web site registrations, and guest books. It could even be that someone sent you an electronic post card or greeting card and inadvertently signed you up for junk e-mail.

Isn't there a law against it? Despite years of stops and starts on many bills, there is no federal legislation concerning unsolicited commercial email. There are currently six bills concerning unsolicited commercial email before the 107th Congress but none have passed yet. Many states have laws, statutes, and rules regulating spam but New York State is not included among those.

Doesn't Cornell have a policy against spam? Junk e-mail, although annoying, is not against Cornell University policy unless it is also a chain letter or scam. If it is chain mail delete the message and do not forward it on. If you feel the need to report either a chain letter or a scam the first step is to contact your local computer support personnel. CIT's Rights and Responsibilities web page has information on these policies and how to report violations at http://www.cit.cornell.edu/computer/responsible-use/

How do I get rid of it? The best way to handle spam is to just plain delete it. Don't reply to the message and don't click on any links that give you the option to remove your email address unless you are sure that it is from a reputable company. Most often all that you

accomplish is to let the spammer know there is someone actually reading the email messages at that address.

Most email programs such as Eudora and Outlook offer the capability to filter your incoming email messages and send unwanted messages to the trash. For Eudora see http://www.cit.cornell.edu/computer/email/eudora/organizing.html#filter and if you are using Microsoft Outlook you can try http://office.microsoft.com/assistance/9798/junkmail.aspx

The Federal Trade Commission and Cornell Information Technologies both offer suggestions about what to do with spam:

FTC: Trouble @ the In-Box: http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/pubs/online/inbox.htm

CIT: Privacy Tips for E-mail and Newsgroups: http://www.cit.cornell.edu/computer/security/emailtips.html

How do I keep from getting more? The only sure fire way to not get spam is to not do anything on the Internet, but most of us do not have that option. Short of that drastic measure, here are some recommendations that may help to keep you off of spammers' lists:

- Keep a separate email address for forms that you fill out on webpages.
- Don't fill out forms on webpages unless it is for a reputable company.
- Change your newsreader's settings to add -nospam to your email address.
- Try not to put your email address on a webpage or add -nospam to it if you need to do so.
- Don't respond to the spam you are already getting.

Unfortunately, in this modern lifestyle spam is becoming as common and annoying (if not more so) as telemarketers and telephone scam artists. The big difference is that it takes less time to email a thousand people your advertisement than it does to call each person individually.

Cornell Resources:

CIT RIGHTS and RESPONSIBILITIES
http://www.cit.cornell.edu/computer/responsible-use/

Organizing Your E-mail with Eudora
http://www.cit.cornell.edu/computer/email/eudora/organizing.html#filter

Privacy tips for e-mail and newsgroups
http://www.cit.cornell.edu/computer/security/emailtips.html

Other Sources:

Spam Law http://www.spamlaws.com

Junk E-Mail Filters for Outlook
http://office.microsoft.com/assistance/9798/junkmail.aspx

Trouble @ the In-Box (FTC) http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/pubs/online/inbox.htm