

Social Cyber Security & Economics

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July 26, 2026

The GlassWasherParts.com letter describes how a compromised platform provider that operated the GlassasherParts website led to unauthorized disclosure of customers personal and financial data. The extent of the disclosure goes from customer's names, addresses, payment-card information during transactions to historical card data. It was discovered in November and reported to the company on February 6, 2017. Customer notice was delayed because of a law-enforcement investigation.

The company says it had no evidence of actual misuse at the time of the letter. Customers were advised to contact their card issuer for a replacement card, monitor bank and card statements, and report suspicious activity. The platform provider removed the malware, engaged a cybersecurity firm, and began monitoring its systems.

Reading the document reminded me of some social sciences and Economics notably:

- Rational choice theory: The attackers may have weighed the financial payoff from stealing payment-card data against the perceived risk of being caught. Weak security encountered during exploitation might have convinced them of possible delayed detection can make the crime seem less risky.
- Deterrence theory: The company's cooperation with cybersecurity professionals and federal law enforcement reflects an increased likelihood of detection and punishment for future offenders.
- Information asymmetry (economics): Although it was following instructions from law enforcement, customers did not know their information was exposed while the platform provider and investigators had more information. This imbalance makes it difficult for consumers to protect themselves promptly.
- Externalities (economics): The data breach may create costs beyond the business itself. Customers may lose time, money, credit security, and trust, and customers banks might have to replace cards and investigate fraud. These are negative external costs caused by inadequate cybersecurity.

Sources

Glasswasherparts.com. (2017). *Sample data breach notification* [Letter]. https://dojmt.gov/wp-content/uploads/Glasswasherparts.com_.pdf