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Cyber Threats Growing for Big Dorset Firms, Warn Experts

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Large businesses in Dorset are finding themselves more exposed to cyberattacks than ever before, according to new research from business advisory group Azets. As companies grow, so too does the amount of data they handle and with it, the risk of being targeted by cybercriminals.

The latest Azets Barometer, a biannual survey conducted by the international firm with offices in Poole and Blandford, highlights a clear pattern: the bigger the business, the more likely it is to face a cyber incident.

Over the past year, only 41% of large UK businesses avoided a cybersecurity breach. In contrast, 65% of smaller companies reported no such incidents. Sectors like finance, retail, and hospitality were among the hardest hit, while industries such as construction and healthcare saw fewer issues 80% and 76% of those firms, respectively, stayed incident-free.

Some well-known names have already felt the sting. Marks & Spencer recently revealed that a cyberattack disrupted their systems for over a month and is expected to cost them £300 million in lost profits. Other major retailers like the Co-op, Harrods, and Adidas have also fallen victim to recent cyber threats.

Across all UK businesses, 58% reported no cyber incidents last year, slightly better than the European average of 50%. However, 26% experienced at least one breach, and 9% suffered multiple attacks. These numbers, while better than the EU average, still point to a troubling trend.

Paul Kelly, Head of Cyber and Data Privacy Services at Azets, called the findings "worrying," especially for larger companies that rely heavily on data. He stressed the importance of improving cyber resilience, not only in high-risk industries but across the board.

"Even though the majority of smaller organisations report no incidents, it's a matter of *when* cybersecurity incidents occur, not *if*," Kelly said. "Smaller organisations must continue to be vigilant and invest in cyber resilience measures to reduce the risk of incidents occurring."

The message is clear: no business is too small or too large to be targeted. As cyber threats evolve and become more sophisticated, every organisation must treat cybersecurity as a priority, not an afterthought.

With attacks now affecting day-to-day operations and financial performance, the digital front line has become one of the most critical areas of defence for businesses of all sizes.

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