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Posted At: Saturday, April 10, 2004 2:59 AM
Posted To: spywareworkshop2004
Conversation: Spyware Workshop - Comment, P044509
Subject: Spyware Workshop - Comment, P044509

I am a sergeant in a police department in charge of its technology, and it is a constant and nightmarish battle to keep spyware and adware off our desktop computers and interfering with our operations. Our officers are certainly allowed and able to browse the internet, and they do so for everything from law enforcement training and interest, to killing time over their breaks.

While we have two different freeware spy-ware and ad-ware removal programs on each desktop pc, let me describe to you what happens with some of this spyware, when an unknowing user opens a webpage that harbors it. Some of the adware takes immediate control of the computer, opening the CD-Drive door, changing the homepage, and sending the user into an endless cycle of advertising popups. A particular offender is Xupiter toolbar which installs itself, unbeknownst to the user, but nothing works properly afterward and soon I am summoned, just to find out that this 'legitimate' advertising company has again, hijacked a police computer for its own purposes. Comet Cursor is another similar thorn, and Gain and Gator slip in their software on the sly by tricking the user into clicking on its popup.

I can spend two hours of tax-payer money each shift I work, removing this hijacking software from our department's 12 desktop pcs, first by running the anti-adware software, and then by hand-picking remaining items out of the files and registries. The advertising companies would tell us their software is not harmful, but I know better, having watched Xupiter gobble up more and more space and cause computer dysfunction on slower PCs who can't handle much running in the background. Aside from the fact that it collects user information, spyware can bring a normal user's PC to its knees. Thankfully I am comfortable with computing, and my department doesn't have to spend further tax money sending out disabled PCs to private businesses for repair! I am 100% convinced, that spyware and Adware do MORE damage to user computers than viruses. Because thankfully, we have anti-virus software that is widely used and Internet Service Providers do everything they can to halt the spread of viruses. On the other hand, adware and spyware is used for the same purposes as computer viruses (hijack your computer for their own purposes, and make it difficult to remove) and yet its legal! We have had only one desktop PC disabled in two years due to computer 'viruses' but I have had to fix many instances of our PCs taken over by spyware and adware.

For god's sake, FCC, these spyware and adware programs exhibit code and behavior, that if they were coded by some teenager, would classify as a computer virus! Just because the virus is being spread by a company with a tax ID number, shouldn't make it legal. Protect us from internet ad-terrorism, and set up stronger rules that allow a user to opt in or at least opt-out! of spyware and adware.

Sergeant JR Rutecki