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COMING NEXT MONTH:

~ Quick Tips (Security)

READY NET GO ... NEWS

April 2004<http://www.readynetgo.net>**610-856-0990**

Tip of the Month

Change your browsers Home Page

For Internet Explorer 5.0, 5.5, 6.0:

1. Open IE
2. Click **Tools** on the Main Menu
3. Scroll down to **Internet Options...**
4. Under the **General** Tab, you can change the address of your home page in the top section.
5. Type in an address such as <http://www.google.com> or any other address you want to appear when you open up the browser.
6. Click **OK** when complete.

For Netscape 7.1

1. Open Netscape
2. Click **Edit** on the Main Menu
3. Scroll down to **Preferences**
4. On the **Navigator** screen, change your desired Home page in the Location box (in the middle of the screen)
5. If you are currently viewing the page you want as your home page, click the button, **Use Current Page**
6. Click **OK** when complete

NOTE: If you have an earlier version of Netscape, upgrade now – Netscape 7.1 is more secure and has improved features

Could Your Computers Have Spyware or Adware Installed?

Even though viruses and other malicious code (otherwise known as Malware) have been around for twenty years, their impact has only recently become front page news.

Computers have become a necessity in our business and personal lives and therefore it makes them an easy target for advertising, disruption and malicious activity. Two newcomers on the scene are spyware and adware which are wreaking havoc with internet users around the world.

Spyware is defined as software that monitors, tracks or reports information about you to a third party without your consent. It is typically installed along with a software program that the user downloads (freeware or shareware), through media players, peer-to-peer networks, instant messaging programs, and individual websites.

While some types of spyware are merely annoying, others are quite malicious. A Trojan horse could be installed on your computer and could send personal information, like credit card or social security numbers or confidential business documents, to its creator. The most difficult aspect of spyware is that it is nearly always hidden from the user and is difficult if not impossible to uninstall. The only way you will know if you are infected is through symptoms such as unusually slow performance, offline modem activity or the appearance of pop-up ads. For this reason, it is important to use anti-spyware software in addition to anti-virus software. Anti-spyware software will catch and remove potentially harmful programs that may be running behind the scenes.

WWW (Websites Worth Watching)

1. www.webopedia.com – Online dictionary and search engine for technology terms
2. www.cdt.org/ – Center for Democracy and Technology – privacy group that addresses spyware dangers
3. www.cexx.org – Counter Exploitation organization – tracks and distributes fixes for known spyware.
4. www.doxdesk.com/parasite – Alphabetical listing of spyware and adware programs. Excellent resource!

Adware is software that displays advertisements on computers usually in the form of pop-up ads while browsing or by using certain software [not to be confused with the anti-spyware software Ad-aware]. This practice may be overt – in exchange for using a free program, you agree to allow advertisements (as in many free internet service providers) or covert – you may download software unaware that embedded in their privacy policy is information relating to additional tracking software that will be installed along with the program you want. Many freeware and shareware programs generate revenue by selling this ability to piggyback on their software. The spyware company then tracks and reports your online activity gathering marketing data to sell directly to advertisers. Adware, in most instances, is a nuisance like SPAM (proliferation of advertisements via email). For businesses and those concerned about privacy, however, adware is simply not tolerable.

How to avoid Spyware & Adware

To avoid and/or limit the occurrence of these annoying and oftentimes malicious programs:

1. Limit your use of shareware and freeware – use only thoroughly tested programs that have received numerous industry and personal endorsements.
2. Don't use instant messaging programs or engage in chat rooms
3. Be aware that many Spyware programs are downloaded through music and file sharing programs – eliminate the use of these programs in a business environment.
4. Install a Spyware checker such as Lavasoft's Ad-aware, Spybot Search & Destroy or Pest Patrol.
5. Verify the software that is loaded on the computer by checking the Add/Remove Programs folder in the Control Panel. If something looks suspicious, research it online and then remove if necessary. {Note: many Spyware programs are difficult to detect and uninstall. Don't rely on this method solely}
6. You may also want to make it a point to empty the Temporary Internet Folder of files and cookies. Even if there are no malicious files, it's still a good practice to delete these files to free up hard drive space.
7. If a dialog box pops up suddenly while you are surfing the web, click Cancel (unless you specifically requested to download a file or know exactly what will happen if you click OK).
8. Although SPAM is not considered adware or spyware, it is still an annoying form of advertising that many people want to control. DO NOT click on any links in "SPAM" emails even if the topic interests you. The only way to lessen the occurrence of SPAM is to make it unprofitable for the spammers. Every time you click on a link, this activity is recorded and analyzed. The more people click on links, the more incentive there is for spammers to keep sending emails. If you're interested in the topic, type the subject in a search engine and go to the site directly – NOT through email.

Three programs that we highly recommend as anti-spyware solutions are:

1. **Ad-Aware** – <http://www.lavasoftusa.com>
2. **Spybot Search & Destroy** – <http://www.safer-networking.org>
3. **Pest Patrol** – <http://www.pestpatrol.com>

These programs have been thoroughly tested and recommended by third party organizations. They are also updated regularly ensuring that their software is current for the latest malicious codes. Some organizations have taken the Spyware epidemic to all new levels and are using anti-spyware software to actually infect people's machines with spyware. So be careful with the programs you research and heed the advice of experts.