

The Active Consumer

Protect Yourself Against The Newest Internet Pests

(NAPSA)—As a computer user, have you recently noticed:

- Advertisements that suddenly “pop-up” on your screen—and you can’t delete them?

- Charges for 1-900 calls on your phone bill that you never made?

- Your PC frequently crashes or seems sluggish for no apparent reason?

If any of these “symptoms” sound familiar, your computer may be infected with the latest Internet pest: adware, or annoyware, recently dubbed “spyware” by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). This annoyware feeds information about the Web sites you’ve visited to a software program that then hits you with a pop-up ad based on your interests.

Kevin Zaney, Executive Vice President of Internet Strategy for Wells Fargo, said, “Pop-up software is often not only frustrating, but more importantly, can be confusing to consumers. Consumers have the right to know exactly where these pop-ups are originating and how to get them off their computer.”

A study published by the FTC found that more than 40 percent of consumers who experienced pop-up ads believed the Web site they were on—not the pop-up advertiser—was responsible or permitted the ad to appear. Moreover, approximately 33 percent of those consumers surveyed said the pop-up ad would cause them to have a less favorable opinion of the underlying Web site.

These programs are growing at an alarming rate and extend well beyond the 60,000 viruses in circulation today. A recent survey conducted by the National Cyber Security Alliance found that nearly 90 percent of all PCs could



Spyware—programs hidden in your computer—can cause all sorts of problems.

be infected with at least one form of annoyware.

Wells Fargo, along with several other corporations, has adopted a corporate policy against engaging in pop-up advertising. In a similar approach, Major League Baseball recently announced that it would stop signing new business contracts with any firm that advertises with adware companies. More organizations need to follow.

Wells Fargo, a member of the GetNetWise coalition and the leader in Internet banking, provides the following security tips to help safeguard consumers’ personal information against suspicious pop-up ads:

- Avoid downloading files from unknown sources.
- Be suspicious of any software program being offered for free over the Internet.
- Keep your computer operating system and Web browser up-to-date with the latest patches.
- Keep your Web browser security settings on high, or at least medium.

For more information, visit www.getnetwise.org, a nationwide program to educate consumers on safe and protective Web behavior.