

SPYWARE OVERVIEW

WHAT IS SPYWARE?

Literally hundreds of 'free' ad supported utilities and applications are available for download from the Internet - sometimes called Adware. Many of utilities are quite robust, and perform very well for the end user who download them. Most (but not all) of the ads placed on this software contain executable programs, super cookies, and registry entries that collect statistical data from computer, which is reported back to the producer, hence the new term of Spyware. This practice is not illegal, since no sensitive or identifying data is collected, act of data transmission is disclosed in the Privacy Statement of legitimate advertisers. Sharing of such data may also be discreetly revealed in the End User License Agreement of the software. The fact remains that the producers of the ads are using your CPU cycles to collect this data, and your Internet connection to transmit this data - your computer is now never for their interests.

HOW DO I KNOW?

Much has been written about the most notorious applications containing spyware, such as BonziBuddy, Comet Cursor, Gator, Realplayer, Hotbar, Flys and Aureate/Radiate. But there are hundreds of other applications that also contain spyware - to learn which ones would put you at risk, go to www.spychecker.com <<http://www.spychecker.com>> for a searchable database. Another excellent resource called Spy Chaser can be downloaded from www.camtech2000.net/Pages/SpyChaser.net <<http://www.camtech2000.net/Pages/SpyChaser.net>> - it is a database you can access at any time from your hard drive, on line or off line. Finally, try a simple Google search on the application you want to download, and see what is being said about it. Some utilities containing spyware are particularly difficult to fully uninstall, so a little research might pay off.

DO I ALREADY HAVE SPYWARE?

It is very possible your computer contains some cookie files and registry entries that are spyware. The worst case scenario would be a hidden spyware program hard at work in your computer recording your surfing habits, downloaded files, and media preferences, to name just a few, and reporting back to the 'Mother's Office'. Discover and delete them by downloading Ad-Aware from www.lavasoftusa.com <<http://www.lavasoftusa.com>> , a free and very functional utility, which is quite easy to use.

For a detailed explanation of these utilities and a demonstration of how to find, download, and use them, a Computer Security/Spyware class will be conducted in the Computer Club lab on February 1st at 4:00 p.m. A sign-up sheet can be found in the lab in binder #11.

