

## Quarterly Issue



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### **File-sharing software reveals user's private info**

Thousands of Americans may unwittingly be sharing personal medical and financial information stored on their home computers when they use file-sharing software, according to a new study by University of Ottawa's Electronic Health Information Laboratory.

This study found evidence of outsiders actively searching for files containing private health and financial information on peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing networks such as Gnutella, eDonkey and BitTorrent. P2P networks let users connect with the computers of other users on the network and search for and download files.

"Very simple search terms such as 'medical records' or 'credit card' were quite effective in returning sensitive documents," says Khaled El Eman, a senior scientist at the University. Retrieving this information, he added, does not require world-class computer hacking skills.

"There are around 250 known [P2P file-sharing programs](#)," he said. "And they vary in their badness. Some of them are known to automatically share everything on your machine without informing you what it's sharing. Some of them are better behaved."

Whether you are a private individual or a healthcare worker taking patient records home, the only guaranteed way to keep your data safe is to avoid keeping it on a computer that does not have a file-sharing program installed.

For home users, [that's not always easy](#). Teenagers are particularly fond of file sharing, El Eman said, and will frequently install programs without telling anyone.

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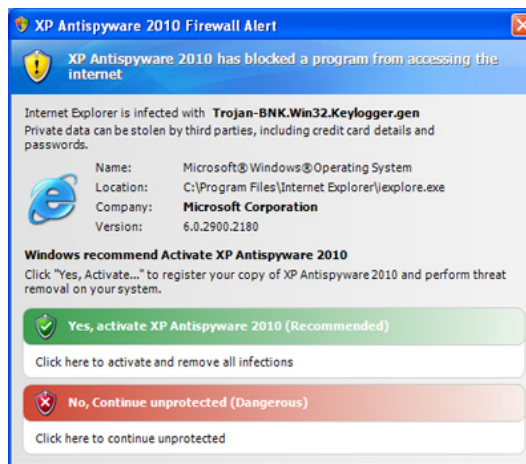
Come on in!

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**Questions, comments or suggestions?**

Click [here](#).



## What is Fakeware?

Fakeware ([fake security software](#)) is a popular security attack. The virus, trojan or spyware masquerades as software that is useful, trying to help you protect your computer. Its headline looks official. You will see a pop-up saying something like this: “Your computer is infected. Would you like to remove these infections?” It might even show a list of infected files to get your attention.

[Of course you click YES!](#) The next thing you know, windows are popping up all over the place saying your computer is infected. When you try to launch your browser it takes you to a malware site seeking to extract a payment. At that point you really are infected.

The version our clients have seen uses the title [XP Antispyware 2010](#) (last year it was 2009). The first question you should ask is “Did this message come from my security software?” If you are running Avast, AVG, Norton, McAfee or whatever, the pop up message should have their banner. If the answer is NO, try to close the popup window. [Call your support professional](#).

## How did this virus sneak past security?

It didn't. It happens when you visit a website that is infected or has a malicious intent. The fakeware launches through a pop-up window that suggests you need to take action now.

## What can you do to prevent this problem?

- Block popups in your browser.
- Be wary of websites you visit. If a deal that attracted you is too good to be true, it probably is.
- Don't click on links from people you don't know.
- If your business can afford it, invest in hardware and software that will limit the websites you and your employees can visit. I know that sounds harsh, but many of the infestations come in because people are just surfing the web.

**What if you become infected?** Understand once your browser is compromised you won't be able to download a solution. Just turn off the computer and [call for help](#).

**The lesson:** Be wary of the [websites](#) you visit. Not all of them are as friendly or as innocent as they seem.

### **100 potential attacks per second blocked in 2009**

Symantec released its new [security threat report](#) which highlights key trends in cybercrime from Jan.1, 2009 to Dec. 31, 2009. In a year bookended by two very prominent cyber attacks – Conficker in the opening months of the year and Hydraq at the very end – the report reveals continued growth in both the volume and sophistication of cybercrime attacks.

Applying security patches continues to be a challenge for many users. The report found that maintaining a secure, patched system became more challenging than ever in 2009. Moreover, many users are failing to patch even very old vulnerabilities. For example, the Microsoft Internet Explorer ADODB.Stream Object File Installation Weakness was published on August 23, 2003, and fixes have been available since July 2, 2004, yet it was the second-most attacked Web-based vulnerability in 2009.

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## Spring cleaning for your computer

A spring cleaning can help your computer run faster and allow you to work more productively.

### Dust it!

Don't forget to unplug the electricity from the computer first!

It is best to do this outside with the wind blowing away from you.

There is a bit more to cleaning a computer than opening up the case and blowing on it with your mouth. You will need compressed air. There are two methods of compressed air available; one is to purchase a can of compressed air which is designed for cleaning hardware and is available at most large electronic stores. However, this method is only effective if the dust isn't caked on. The other method is to use a compressor (the type used to pump up car tires) which is much more powerful but can damage a computer if not done correctly.

### Get rid of clutter

Start your computer clean up with the most visible items — icons. Look at your system tray or taskbar on the bottom right corner. Those small icons represent programs that start up as your computer boots. It takes time for your computer to find the icons for all those shortcuts. Remove or turn off unnecessary ones, like Live Messenger, with a right click.

Do you need immediate access to all those files, pictures and MP3s on your desktop? Not likely. **Categorize them** in the Documents, Photos and Music folders to keep them organized and eliminate the clutter on your desktop.

### Remove old programs

If you've never used a program that came with your computer or haven't

used it in over a year, uninstall it. Don't forget to empty the Recycle Bin.

### **Defrag your computer**

As you work on your computer, information gets stored onto the hard drive in bits and pieces - wherever there is space. To open a certain file, your computer runs around looking for all the components. Think of it as having various chapters of a book on shelves throughout your home and having to find all the sections when you want to read the full text.

Once a year is generally all a defragment needs to be run. The defrag tool is found here:

*Start > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Disk Defragmenter > Analyze button > after the analysis it will tell you if you should defragment your hard drive > If it is recommended, click the Defragment button > when it is complete > close all open pop-up windows (no need to review the log, the information there, it will only confuse)*

### **Upgrade your operating system**

Keep your software and hardware frequently updated to get the best performance out of your system. Updates can be downloaded by visiting the manufacturer's web site. Windows Update (*Start > Control Panel > Windows Update*) can also scan your system and present a list of updatable items.

There is a little reminder box that will occasionally pop up in the right-hand corner of your screen when you start Windows. That reminder will let you know when you need to update. Just clicking on it will install the necessary upgrades for your system.

### **Clear your cache**

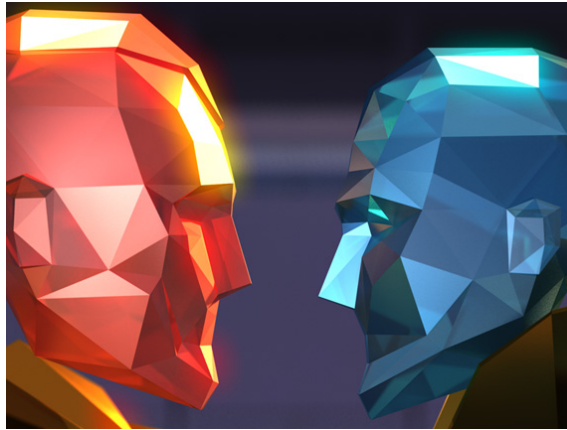
Every time you visit a new web site, content is stored in your Temporary Internet Files folder, or Cache. Not only does this make surfing the web slower, but it also takes up valuable space on your hard drive.

*While on Internet Explorer, click on **Tools** and then **Internet Options**. On the **General tab** under **Browsing history**, click **Delete button**, **Temporary Internet Files** click **Delete button**, click **Close** and click **OK**.*

### **Assess your memory and tools**

The more programs you keep open while you work, the more random access memory, or RAM, you need to keep them running smoothly. [At least 1 GB of RAM will keep XP Pro snappy and 3 GB is recommended for Vista Premium, Business or Ultimate and 4GB at least for Windows 7.](#)

Make sure your keyboard and office layout are [ergonomically correct](#). Even if your computer is optimized, efficiency will quickly deteriorate if you develop carpal tunnel syndrome.



## MACs are safer to use than PCs, right?

No.

The number of PCs world wide is far greater than MACs. This makes the *impact* from any attack on a PC greater. This doesn't mean MACs are safer but on the contrary, the exact opposite. Since the prestige to hack a MAC is not publicized, this makes it seemingly a safer computer due to the lack of press.

The results don't look good for Apple: 20 bugs in its Preview application--all of which apply to Safari as well--compared with only 3 or 4 each in Adobe Reader and Microsoft's PowerPoint. "It's shocking that Apple didn't do this first," says [Charlie A. Miller](#), MAC hacker. "The only skill I've used here is patience."

In March, Miller publicized his discovery of the 20 security vulnerabilities in Apple's software. Each would allow a cybercriminal to take over the computer of a user who's tricked into opening a certain PDF attachment or who simply visits an infected Web page using Apple's Safari browser. **All are still unaddressed.**



**Geek speak translated**

If you're new to computing (and even if you're not) you might be thinking that whatever language Geeks speak, it isn't English. Computing has always been a jargon lover's paradise, and it's become even more so, with the Internet.

Here are just a few quick definitions:

***Bandwidth***

A network connection's maximum capacity for carrying data traffic

***Banner Ad***

A long, rectangular image that can be placed just about anywhere on a Web page containing text, images or animations. It is a link, when clicking on the advertisement, takes you to the advertiser's website.

***Browser***

A software program that allows users to access the Internet

***Hard Drive***

The place where your data is stored. The term "hard drive" is actually short for "hard disk drive." The term "hard disk" refers to the actual disks inside the drive. However, all three of these terms are usually seen as referring to the same thing.

Two typed pages = 1 kilobyte

megabyte = 1000 kilobytes

gigabyte = 1000 megabytes (2,000,000 typed pages)

We can put it in money terms...

1 byte = \$1

1 kilobyte (1kb) = \$1000

1 megabyte (1Mb) = \$1,000,000

1 gigabyte (1Gb) = \$1,000,000,000

1 terabyte (1Tb) = \$1,000,000,000,000 (that's a Trillion dollars)

***User***

The person using the computer

Some good web sites to get basic definitions, of which are in the

thousands, is:

<http://www.sharpened.net/glossary/>

Around the office geek speak dictionary:

[http://www.mainframe.org/humour/computer\\_geekspeak.htm](http://www.mainframe.org/humour/computer_geekspeak.htm)

Everyday geek speak dictionary:

<http://www.urbangeek.net/geek/dictionary/geekspeaka-c.html>

Texting dictionary:

[http://www.webopedia.com/quick\\_ref/textmessageabbreviations.asp](http://www.webopedia.com/quick_ref/textmessageabbreviations.asp)



### **Joe's Small Business Notes:**

A competitor to P.T. Barnum actually said the well-known quote, "There's a sucker born every minute" but it certainly rings true when it comes to technology in general and computers, specifically. Add that to the sign I have on my 'lab' wall at home "Computer Room- mistakes made at the speed of light" and you have a dangerous combination. Scams being perpetrated 24/7 at the speed of light.

Remember, Jerry McGuire's one and only client asking repeatedly, "Show me the money!" No more insightful words were ever spoken and they are about the only protection you have in the Internet Age.

Ask, why am I being offered this? How can it be free (or better yet, WHY would it be free)?

Some publishers, such as those for Malwarebytes and Spybot Search and



Destroy offer shareware licenses for individual machines and corporate clients are required to pay. Shareware means they offer the software in exchange for, hopefully, a donation (usually via PayPal). So, it is a try before you buy model, but you can see where their profit comes from. Same with the trial versions, programs with limited time use, or some other limitation that allows one to see if it works but won't complete the job unless it is paid for. Again, a valid and transparent revenue stream for the publisher.

You Tube, Google, FaceBook, etc. make their money on advertising and providing demographic information to clients. When you use Google, you see the ads. Billboards for the Internet make profits for Google. iTunes sells legit songs for a buck, why would someone give you a song off an album they paid for? Hulu is part owned by NBC Universal and Microsoft. Obviously, you can see the profit motive there.

When you receive an email or a window pops up, STOP AND READ THE BLASTED THING! One wrong click now can take years trying to clean up your credit report or regain a client you just spammed or worse, infected.

**When you click 'OK' in many cases you are actually clicking to override the protection thrown up by your Antivirus or spyware protection.** My favorite was a scam message with a double-negative, "Are you sure you don't want to close this application?" My client's kid, in a hurry as teens usually are, instinctively clicked YES, three times to that question in a week period, causing us to have to clean up the machine each time. He didn't read, he assumed. Any of us who were ever in a playground have been told what happens when you assume!

**Ask yourself this simple question, "Why am I getting this?"** After all, what person or company in their right mind would cleanup, speedup, fix up or give you money for nothing in return? Hum?

The pop up telling you your system is infected... If you have Norton Antivirus or Symantec Endpoint Protection loaded by us on your systems, why would you trust a window popping up telling you to load something called Antivirus 2010? It doesn't say Norton, doesn't say Symantec and you paid for a year of automatic updates, right? Why is there a screen telling you to download updates but the shield built into Windows isn't the one calling out the message?

Or, why download a song or video from some unknown site when you can pay, or with ads inserted, get viewing rights free from a legit site. Miss the last Celebrity Apprentice? Go to NBC.com and do your viewing from there. It makes more sense, right? Or, do you want to hear The Donald tell you "You're Fired"?

The number one reason we have to repair systems is no longer viruses or spyware, but these programs. We now call them fakeware. I wish we'd just call them what they are... **scams**.

This periodic email is solely for information of interest for our circle of friends, partners, BNI members and fellow Chamber Members

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