

Magsiyasat na makina! Intruder Alert!

Spyware/Malware Impact on Consumers

**APECTEL 35 Conference, Quezon City,
Philippines**

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Brief Introduction: WebWatch

- Project of Consumers Union of the U.S., part of Consumer Reports family -- magazine, newsletters, Web sites.
- Solve problems for individual consumers, inform the public, advocate with government and agencies.
- Focused on USA, but working with groups in Malaysia, Thailand, Europe through Consumers International and TACD.
- <http://www.consumerwebwatch.org>
- <http://www.stopbadware.org> venture with Harvard Law School and Oxford Internet Institute.

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Research Reports

Health

HealthRatings.org: Consumer Health
WebWatch Rates 20 Health Information
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Search Engines

Still in Search of Disclosure: Re-evaluating
How Search Engines Explain the Presence of
Advertising in Search Results...[view](#)

Web Credibility

A Matter of Trust: What Users Want From
Web Sites: A Report on Consumer Concerns



Guidelines Compliant Site

Shop Natural

ShopNatural.com -- This Tucson, Arizona-based food co-op has an online inventory of more than 6,000 natural and organic products and publishes a monthly newsletter with news, nutrition and health tips. The company is one of more than 175 Web sites that have pledged to abide by Consumer Reports WebWatch's five guidelines for improving Web credibility....[view](#)

[Take the 'Pledge'](#)

The Problem of Spyware

- **SCOPE:** 59 million Americans have spyware or other malicious badware on their computers. (Source: StopBadware Project). In UK: 21 “spies” per PC (source: Webroot).
- **COST:** Consumers paid as much \$7.8 billion over two years to repair or replace computers infected with viruses and spyware (Source: CR national survey 2006). \$2.6bn/2006, 1/8 infected (CDT).
- **EASY TARGETS:** Of U.S. home computer users, only 21 percent have installed virus protection or firewalls. (Consumer Reports national survey 2006).
- **OS HOLES:** Security flaws in PC software continue to be problematic, with difficult knowledge curve for home consumer.

Challenges to Consumer Education

- **NOMENCLATURE:** Badware is software that fundamentally disregards a user's choice over how his or her computer will be used. This includes spyware, malware, and deceptive adware
Examples: Free screensaver that surreptitiously generates ads; malicious browser toolbar that redirects to different pages.
- **“SCARE” MARKETING:** Proliferation of products from good to bad that claim to defend against spyware, “wash” spyware, etc. Some have vested interest.
- **INDIFFERENCE:** Some consumers willing to accept a certain loss of privacy; some not sure where problem begins.

Legal/Legislative Challenges

- Spyware legislation repeatedly stalls in U.S. Congress
- Makers and purveyors of adware argue in its favor from a marketing perspective
- U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) regulations helpful, action on fake anti-spyware products – but issue is cross-border
- Some ‘badware’ sites unaware their sites are being used for the practice (prelim. StopBadware research)

What Consumers Can Do

- Download free anti-spyware software and run it (SpyBot Search & Destroy)
- Download free anti-virus/security (Avast!)
- Make your own decisions about enabling firewall (some compromise of Web mobility).
- Report problems and share experiences on community sites
- Petition law-enforcement agencies to crack down on problem.

Campaigns: Naming, Praising, Shaming

- WebWatch Publication of credibility guidelines for all Web sites driven by 2002 polling data
- Seeking companies (direct mail) to 'pledge' to uphold guidelines – they demonstrate a desire, we briefly evaluate their sites
- StopBadware follows similar procedure – consumers name, they investigate, we shame, with credible set of guidelines as baseline

Some Advocates in the Fight

- StopBadware (<http://www.stopbadware.org>)
- Spyware Warrior (<http://spywarewarrior.com/>)
- Malware Removal (<http://www.malwareremoval.com/>)