

Computer Fine Scam

Trading Standards Officers are warning PC users to be on their guard against a new scam recently reported to them via Staffordshire Police.

Reports have been received from people who have had screen messages pop up advising them that they were required to pay a £100 'fine' for viewing illegal pornography and terrorism-related content. The users found that their PCs had been locked by the pop-up in an attempt to force payment.

Enquiries into this particular scam are ongoing. However, officers suspect the pop-ups are likely a result of unwitting downloads by the users tricked into installing something under false pretences, such as bogus Anti Virus software, or adult site access software.

The installation would unlikely be done without permission from the user, although it is possible that unpatched PCs could be vulnerable to stealthy, so-called 'drive-by' attacks from compromised websites. These often target vulnerabilities in outdated browsers, such as Internet Explorer 6.

PC users can minimise their vulnerability by observing the following security advice:

1. Keep PC operating systems and software fully patched. Windows users should ensure that their machines are set to automatically check for Windows updates.
2. If you are still using it, upgrade from Internet Explorer 6 immediately.
3. Never open attachments or click on links in unsolicited emails
4. Do not allow unsupervised Internet access to minors
5. Install and regularly update legitimate antivirus, anti-spyware and firewall software
6. Be aware of previous warnings and advice on fake antivirus software ([Fake anti virus Alert](#))
7. Never be tempted to install counterfeited or 'hacked' software products, as these often include malicious code.
8. Enjoy the Internet, but proceed with caution, and be sceptical of offers that seem too good to be true.

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All our alerts are available in a range of formats and languages, including large print. Please contact Community Development if this would be helpful to you, or someone you know. Community Development, 14 Martin Street, Stafford, ST16 2LG E-mail: community.development@staffordshire.gov.uk

