

It's all Geek to Me!!

Spyware, what is Spyware!



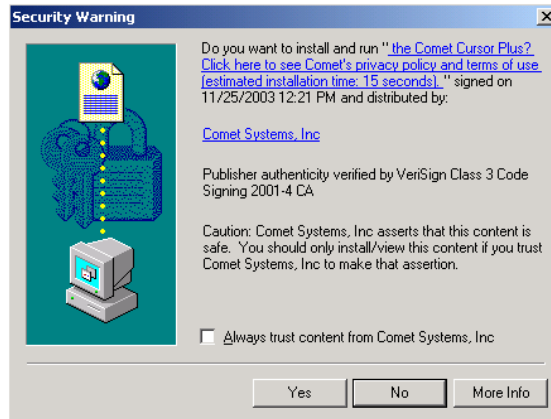
Recently I wrote a brief column about computer viruses. While out on service calls this week I came across a customer that could no longer access the Internet. The family had a shared computer with broadband access to the Internet, but when they opened Internet Explorer nothing happened. Their kids were also disappointed because they could no longer Instant Message with their friends.

When I got on site, I started by looking at their Antivirus software to be sure it was up-to-date. When they booked the appointment, I had recommended they run a virus scan. The scan they had done found a couple of viruses and cleaned them, but the problem still existed.

I then ran a scan for Spyware and found 385 objects, when I quarantined the items and rebooted the PC, IE was working again. After going through what I found with the customer, they mentioned that they had heard of Spyware but did not know much about it.

Spyware is any type of software that uses a persons Internet connection in the background without their knowledge or permission. This software will contact it's home base with information about your surfing habits. Often this software is included with other utilities that are loaded onto your PC as you surf the net. Some Spyware programs are on the Most Downloaded lists at some Internet sites.

If you see a box similar to the one below while you surf the net, a program is being loaded onto your computer.



It's up to you to decide if you want the program installed on your computer and decide Yes or No. While there is nothing illegal about Spyware, information about you is being transmitted somewhere. Legitimate companies will tell you that they are transmitting information and the type of information collected, but there is no way to control it. The technology could transmit much more information than just statistics.

OK, so you know that you surf the net and you have probably seen the security warning box more than once, so what do you do about it?

Well you can Google it and find out more information including tools to detect and remove Spyware. You can also search for my two favorite tools for this problem, Ad-Aware & SpyBot. These are free tools that are available on the internet and are fairly easy to install, update and run. They work well and if run regularly can help keep your information safe.

If you're more comfortable having someone do this for you, give us a call, we're happy to come to your home or office and help out. Remember, your PC requires regular care and maintenance. If cared for properly it will provide years of reliable service.

Steve Cote is the owner of Copper Beech Technology Services, he has been involved in the computer industry since 1982 and is located in Salem, NH. Started in 2003, Copper Beech Technology provides onsite computer support services to residential and small business customers in the Merrimack Valley and surrounding communities. These services include PC installation, repairs, upgrades, network installations, virus detection/removal as well as web and e-mail hosting services. You can contact Copper Beech Technology by e-mail at contact@cbtechserv.com. Appointments can also be scheduled by calling 603-490-0691.