

“Your computer may be infected with a virus! Click here to scan for viruses!”

By Kristin Beasley of Beasley Technology

This alarming pop-up, complete with an official-looking “Antivirus 2009” graphic, can appear suddenly while you are surfing the Web. It is designed to frighten you into starting the “scan.” There are two problems with this scenario. First, you don’t actually have a virus. Second, clicking on the “Scan Now” button actually introduces malicious software, or malware, onto your computer. The scan finds fake “infected files” and tries to get you to purchase software to “remove” them. It also installs a program that produces fake messages while you are using Internet Explorer. These messages all find some way to inform you that your computer is “infected” and that you need to purchase software to remove the infection. If you fall for the scam, you have purchased software to fix an infection you never had, and you are still left with the Antivirus 2009 malware on your computer.

How can you avoid this scenario, and countless others like it that lurk on the Internet? Installing three programs will protect your computer. The first, Panda Antivirus, will protect your computer from virus infections. This way, you can safely ignore any pop-up that warns you of a virus infection unless it is from the Panda software. Panda can be set to automatically update itself and scan your computer for viruses at a certain time each day, making it virtually maintenance-free. You can purchase a subscription

to Panda at Beasley Technology for \$50 per year; however, discounts are available in some instances. Call or come by for details.

The second and third programs are free Internet downloads. The first, Malwarebytes, is an anti-malware program that scans, identifies, and removes malicious software from your computer. It can be downloaded from www.malwarebytes.org. You will need to run this

program regularly, first updating the software and then scanning your system. The other program, Spybot Search and Destroy, can be downloaded at www.safer-networking.org. This program protects you from spyware. Spyware is software that tracks your activity on the web and sends that information to participating companies, who then target advertising (often in the form of pop-ups) to your specific tastes. It can slow down your computer and your

Web browsing experience. Spybot identifies and removes this software. The program works similarly to Malwarebytes, and you will need to update and scan regularly to be sure your system is protected.

Working together, these three programs can help you feel certain of your safety while surfing the Web. The next time an alarming message pops up on your computer, you will be able to recognize it for what it is—just one more attempt to compromise your system—and to avoid its attack. If you have questions about any of these programs or need to purchase a subscription to Panda, call Beasley Technology at (918) 225-6900.

