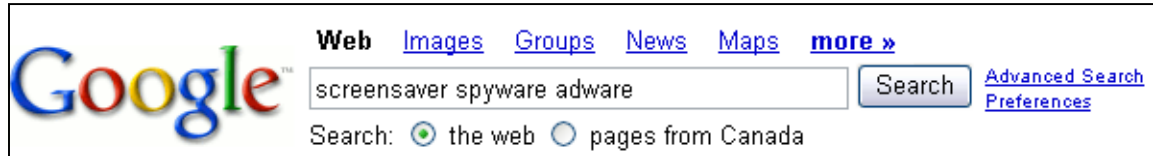

BPSD Technology Publication

The Dangers of Desktop Downloads

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You think it's safe to download screensavers? What about desktop themes and wallpapers? Think again. Do a search like the one below.



You will find many sites advertising adware free or spyware free screensavers. That is because so many screensavers contain adware or spyware that the makers are trying to assure you theirs is safe. The problem is: Can you believe them?

The best way to keep your computer running properly is to avoid downloading programs that may contain spyware or adware and to regularly run anti-spyware programs like AdAware and SpyBot.

Once you have loaded screensavers, desktop themes and wallpapers they might be difficult to completely remove from your computer. The best advice is to use the screensavers, desktop themes and wallpapers that came with your Windows operating system.

Some examples of what some screensavers do to your computer:

Bald Eagle Screensaver

- ◆ Adds other software
- ◆ Shows advertisements

Sexy Video Screensaver

- ◆ Adds other software
- ◆ Autostarts/Stays Resident
- ◆ Connects to the Internet
- ◆ Shows Advertisements
- ◆ Uses a unique tracking code

Tips To Avoid Spyware

1. Update Windows
2. Use an alternate browser such as Firefox as much as possible. If a site does not show up properly with Firefox, view that page with Microsoft Internet Explorer.
3. Be careful what you download. Many "freeware" programs come with an enormous amount of bundled spyware that will slow down your system, spawn pop-up advertisements, or just plain crash your browser or even Windows itself.

The article below is from PC Today online magazine

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Dodge The Dangers Of Desktop Downloads

Tips For Finding Spyware-Free Desktops, Themes & Screen Savers



The next time you download software from the Internet, you may get more than you bargained for. A number of screen saver, theme, and wallpaper developers have resorted to bundling their programs with adware and spyware for the purpose of tracking online activity and delivering targeted pop-up ads. As if the invasion of PC privacy wasn't bad enough, an adware or spyware infection may also lead to error messages, slow Internet connections, software conflicts, and other system woes.

The goal, then, is to get the Desktop goodies while avoiding unwanted wares. You can take a big step toward achieving that goal by downloading and installing an anti-spyware utility, which will monitor your system for the presence of recognized spyware and adware offenders. Two of the best anti-spyware utilities are Lavasoft's Ad-aware (www.lavasoft.com) and Spybot-Search & Destroy (www.safer-networking.org), both of which are available in free versions for home computer users. We recommend that you obtain one of these utilities and use it religiously.

That's not enough, though. These free anti-spyware utilities have a couple of significant limitations: They cannot detect the bad stuff until it has already infiltrated your PC, and they aren't perfect. Chunks of malicious code will occasionally slip past them. For this reason you must actively work to prevent adware and spyware from reaching your computer in the first place. The most effective solution is to sever your Internet connection, but who wants to do that? The next best option is to become aware of the risks inherent in downloading screen savers, themes, and wallpapers so you can minimize your exposure to adware and spyware.