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Don't Call that Toll-Free Number!

by Jerry Stern

There's been an increase in phone scams lately. There are multiple types, but the short version is that some pop-up, or scary warning, or fake search result will show a phone number for, allegedly, Microsoft or some other large technology company, like Brother, Canon, Dell, or nearly any well-known company. It's all fake. It may be coming from malware on your computer, or it could just be a bad web site.

(Ask Your Representative For A Free Computer Diagnosis Call 1-877-...)

(1) System Warning:

Your Computer May Have (3) Virus!

Your Location: [Redacted] Your IP address is: [Redacted] Date: Monday, November 17, 2014

What to do:
Call **1-877-...** immediately for assistance on how to remove **malicious pop-ups**. This call is prioritized and 100% free.

More about the threat:
Seeing these pop-up means that you may have malware/adware on your computer which puts the security of your personal data at a serious risk. We strongly advise you call **1-877-...** immediately and get your computer fixed before you continue using the internet, especially for watching movies and shows.

24/7
Free Expert Tech Support

Possible network damages from potential threats:
Data exposed to risk:

1. Your credit card details and banking information
2. Your e-mail passwords and other account passwords
3. Your Facebook, Skype, AIM, ICQ and other chat logs
4. Your private photos, family photos and other sensitive files
5. Your webcam could be access remotely by stalkers with a VPN file

Call 1-877-... Now!

The Scary Bits:

The on-screen warnings to call these numbers are pretty intense. They use flashing icons, loud sound effects and warnings read aloud, which repeat forever. The boxes cannot be closed by any computer user of average skill. (Stop the box from task manager, or just unplug the computer if you must.)

The search results to call these numbers are pretty convincing. They look like genuine manufacturer web sites. Clue: There's usually no physical address, and the site has no more than 3 pages. Real sites for companies like Brother have hundreds of pages, just for printers, and hundreds more for their other product lines.

What You Hear at the Start of that Call:

When these fraudsters get the phone call, they will tell you all kinds of bull-ony:

That your computer is full of viruses. That's False: Viruses are infected documents, and are very rare; most malware is in the adware category now.

That they're Microsoft. Nope.

That they can fix it by logging into your computer. Stop Now. Hang up the phone. Please.

That their boss is the expert at this cleanup. No, he's an expert at getting credit card numbers. And he sets up only remote control, leaving instructions to leave the PC on for a full day so their "technicians" can schedule the work.

That this is big business; it's a traditional boiler room operation, and lots of background discussions are audible.

OK, you've been warned.

Here's what is at the far end of these calls:

Remote-control software is on your computer, connecting to some company with no street address, not even a hint of what country they're in.

The computer is still 'full of viruses' or some such malarky.

Your credit card number is theirs to do with as they please, but usually has a \$400 charge on it, and possibly a recurring charge as well.

They claim to provide a cleanup of the malware. I've followed up on these machines. They're still infected.

They claim to provide a "lifetime antivirus". If they install it at all, they install Microsoft Security Essentials. While it's true that it's lifetime, that's because it's totally free, and light-duty as well. It's only suitable as one layer of protection, in combination with other tools, settings, and services, which they don't provide. It can't clean up adware, and that's what needs cleaning most.

The industry reports include events where these remote fraudsters have deleted data, encrypted photos, or trashed the systems.

When you land on a web site that has only one purpose, to make you pick up the phone, it's fake. No modern technology company wants you to call them; they want you to read the web site and fix your problems yourself.

And when your screen has a popup that can't be closed, that's also a big red flag; the company putting up that message isn't one you should be talking to, doing

business with, or in the same neighborhood with even during daylight hours.

Don't call that number. Close the message, reboot if you must, or call any LOCAL tech for help.

New Windows 10 Installed Itself?

The free Windows 10 shortcut chart is here:

pc410.com/shortcut

Still running Windows 7 or Windows 8? On the same page, our shortcuts for older Windows versions are also available.

Reminder: If Windows 10 isn't what you want, there is an uninstall option, but it goes away after 30 days.



Contact Us

PC410.com is the local computer services division of Science Translations, serving central Maryland, including Baltimore and Westminister.

Call us at 410-871-2877, or from Baltimore, at 410-205-9250.

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