



# Software Security



## Keep Your PC Running Smoothly With Genuine Software

(NAPSA)—What you put into your computer can drastically affect what you get out of it.

Most people don't understand how a computer works. It just does. And when it doesn't, watch out—the sweetest person can turn into a rabid chimpanzee when e-mail, Facebook and morning news are suddenly stuck in a lifeless box.

Computer trouble feels a lot like car trouble. With so many moving parts, it can be frustrating to pinpoint the cause when something goes wrong. So what's the best way to keep your car running smoothly? Be careful what you put into it. Buying cheap tires is probably OK—if you don't mind the howling noise on the freeway or the slight risk that a blowout could send you careening off the road.

The same is true of the software you put in your PC. Counterfeit software comes from people who are copying disks and forging the packaging. And if they're willing to do that, why would they stick to the high standards of real manufacturers? Why wouldn't they add code of their own, embed advertisements or even try to log your keystrokes?

"There are many attractive deals on software to be found on the Internet. So many, in fact, consumers need to know how to identify the retailers that are reputable so that they don't end up with counterfeit versions that can do serious damage to their PC," said Keith Beeman, general manager, Worldwide Anti-Piracy, Microsoft Corp.

Recently, Microsoft conducted a survey that looked at perceptions and attitudes on computer security and counterfeit and nongenuine software. In the United States, not even half (41 percent) of the 308 participants said they



### Can you tell genuine software from counterfeit?

know how to check if a product is pirated or counterfeit.

"Most customers don't know they've purchased counterfeit software. There is a large pool of people who are at risk for unknowingly purchasing counterfeit software that can do serious damage to their PC," said Beeman.

What consumers don't realize is that using counterfeit software is asking for trouble. For example, according to Microsoft and research firm IDC, more than half (59 percent) of the key generators and crack tools downloaded from peer-to-peer networks contained either malicious or potentially unwanted software. In an effort to help keep software pirates from victimizing you, here are some of the misconceptions about counterfeit software that were identified in the research:

- **I can detect pirated software.** It's not that easy. Pirated software is big business—billions of dollars worldwide—so of course a lot's been invested in making the packaging look authentic. According to Microsoft, only 60 percent of people can identify counterfeit.

- **Using counterfeit software is wrong but it won't hurt me.** Are you willing to bet your photographs, your privacy and your credit rating on that? Globally, 51 percent of respondents said that it is never okay to purchase counterfeit. Despite this, one-third said

they have purchased a product they thought might be counterfeit and just over one-quarter purchased a product they knew was counterfeit.

- **Software is the same, whether it's genuine or counterfeit.** A copy is not the same as the original—much less a copy that's been altered. Microsoft and IDC tested hundreds of counterfeit disks from all over the world. More than 40 percent would not install and nearly half contained code that didn't come from Microsoft. To highlight the danger, according to the Microsoft piracy perceptions study, 97 percent indicated it is important that their computer is secure from viruses and other threats.

- **It doesn't matter whom I buy software from online.** Criminal syndicates halfway around the world go to great lengths to sell you pirated software online. The message from Microsoft is to do your homework when shopping online and if you really want to be safe, go to a physical store and buy your software in person.

Microsoft provides free and easy-to-use tools that customers can use to determine if their software is genuine. The How to Tell Web site, [www.microsoft.com/howtotell](http://www.microsoft.com/howtotell), features pictures of recently seized software and guidance on what consumers should look out for when buying software online.

Software pirates make billions of dollars per year selling fake copies on the Internet. All things being equal, just ask yourself whom you'd rather give your money to—a company that provides jobs for local communities, builds great software and stands behind it or someone who was just smart enough to trick you into buying an illegitimate copy.