



Organized Crime Funds Activities Through Software Piracy

(NAPSA)—The link between organized crime, retail and manufacturers is clear. Organized crime can be linked to everything from fake prescription drugs to toothbrushes. In fact, it is becoming obvious to software developers that many of the large-scale commercial pirates are connected to organized crime.

The most brazen software counterfeiters produce CDs, documentation and packaging that is similar to that of the software publisher. Others simply copy onto disks and produce basic labels.

Counterfeiting software is often conducted as a lucrative business, either by petty criminals or increasingly by organized crime. According to the Business Software Alliance (www.bsa.org), “The most profitable counterfeiting operations are controlled by criminal syndicates with networks of distributors throughout the world. For these criminal gangs, which use the counterfeiting trade to launder money and fund other illegal activities, software counterfeiting promises large profits with very little risk of enforcement or penalty.”

For the average American, the closest they want to come to organized crime is watching an episode of “The Sopranos.” While they may be intrigued by the underworld, they certainly do not want to have any part in endorsing or supporting its existence. The fact is, that by trying to get “a good deal” on some new software, people may unknowingly be sup-



Software pirates beware: The FBI is after you.

porting not only this crime, but funding others that may impact their communities and people they know.

What is being done?

In the United States, the Department of Justice, the FBI and other government agencies are doing their part to investigate and bring these criminals to justice. On a regional level, task forces are being formed. For example, the Northern California Computer Crimes Task Force (NC3TF), formed in 2000, is staffed by investigators from local, state and federal law enforcement agencies who have received specialized training in the investigation of high-technology crime, including software piracy.

The general rule of thumb is, “If the price looks too good to be true, it probably is counterfeit software.” Without the demand from the public, the counterfeit software business cannot prosper. Therefore everyone can play a role in helping to eliminate this menace from our society.