

New PC- Security Software Combats Latest Scams

Tools fry Symantec, McAfee And Others Vet Web Sites, Stop 'Spyware' Programs

By VAUHINVARA

NOW THAT the fastest-growing threats on the Internet are Web sites and emails that help criminals steal sensitive financial data, security software is shifting its focus to helping consumers sidestep Internet minefields.

Makers of computer-security software are creating tools aimed at combating the latest profit-oriented tech attacks. The newest tool, which will launch as early as this week from Symantec Corp., is a test service called Norton Confidential. The free service stops malicious programs from logging your keystrokes as you type; it also shows consumers a message when they visit their bank's Web site, confirming they are at the right site and not at a site designed to fool them into disclosing personal information. A paid version of the service is expected this fall, costing \$39 to \$49 for the software and a one-year subscription.

Other new tools are being offered by companies including McAfee Inc., Microsoft Corp., and Check Point Software Technologies Ltd. Once installed, many of these tools will send messages or alerts pointing out that a site listed in Google's search results is known for sending out massive amounts of junk mail, for instance, or telling customers when their credit-card number is floating around on the Internet black market. Some will automatically block people from visiting sites aimed at tricking visitors into giving up sensitive information.

The shift marks a big change in the \$11.9 billion security-software world. For a long time, protecting yourself against technology threats simply meant installing antivirus software on your PC. The software swept the PC clean of nasty programs that slowed down your system.

But hackers are now manipulating code to make money, rather than creating big, noisy viruses aimed at attracting attention to themselves. Some have launched Web sites that load programs known as "spyware" onto your computer; those programs can track your keystrokes as you type, helping them to steal credit-card information or other private information. Then came "phishing," in which a crook could trick you into giving up information like your social security number by luring you to a Web site designed to look like your bank's site.

Before spyware or phishing, people could navigate the Web without worrying that a site might be more dangerous than it appeared. Now it's easy to stumble onto a Web site that masquerades as your bank's site or gets you to accidentally download spyware.

Dodging Trouble

Some of the new programs designed to help consumers avoid Internet scams.

COMPANY	PRODUCT	PRICE	WHAT SETS IT APART
	Norton Confidential	test version is free for now; final product, out this fall, will start at \$39 to \$49 for the software and a one-year subscription	It blocks spyware already hiding on your system from stealing your personal information as you type,

Symantec

Microsoft	Internet Explorer 7	free	
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It gives users the option of barring most "ActiveX controls" - a technology that can be used by hackers to stealthily download spyware without your consent.

Check Point Software Technologies

ZoneAlarm Internet Security Suite 6.5	\$69 and up		
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McAfee SiteAdvisor	free		
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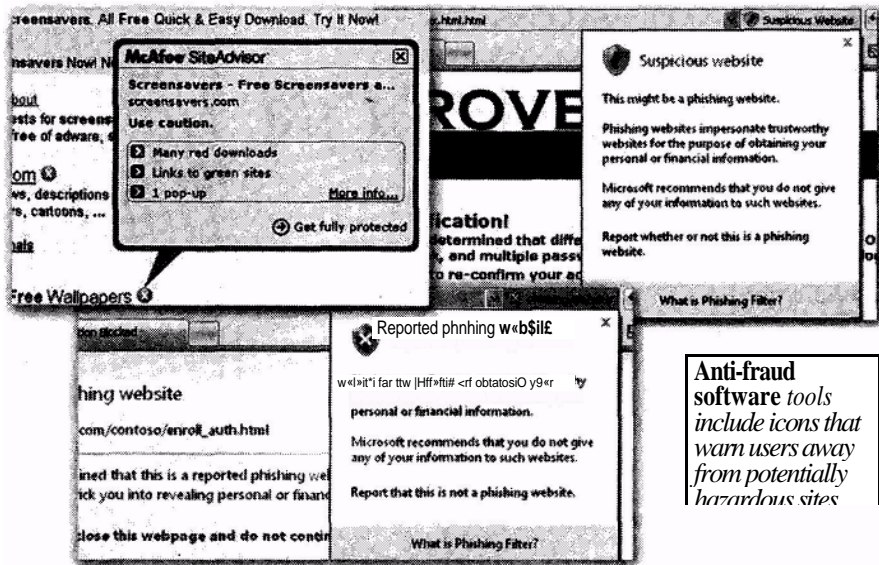
It roams the online black market and alerts you if it finds your personal information up for sale.

Alongside search results, it highlights not only whether a site is known to come with suspicious downloads, but also whether it's likely to flood you with email.

In the second half of last year, the num-

Source: WSJ research

ber of old-fashioned viruses and worms in Explorer 7, Microsoft's new browser, which



programs running on Windows that Symantec found inched up just 1% to 10,992, from the first half of 2005. In the same period, the company discovered an average of 7.9 million phishing attempts a day, up 39%. "Spyware and phishing are actually bigger problems for consumers than viruses," says John Pescatore, a security analyst at Gartner Inc., who expects such threats to become more prevalent.

The new tools to prevent such threats have already attracted consumers like Anthony Levensalor, a 28-year-old Web developer in Las Vegas. Mr. Levensalor downloaded a test version of Internet Ex-

comes built-in with security features that help him avoid downloading spyware or falling for phishing attempts.

Mr. Levensalor tested the browser by clicking on a link in an email he had received purporting to be from his bank; Microsoft quickly flagged the site as a phishing site. Mr. Levensalor says he feels much safer now knowing that he has a safeguard in place if he stumbles into a dark corner of the Web.

Dean Hachamovitch, general manager of Internet Explorer at Microsoft, says Microsoft invested more in security than in any other priority in developing Internet Explorer 7 browser. The browser automatically tries to block phishing sites that try to steal your personal information by stopping the site

n loading, highlighting the Web ad-
>s in red and warning you with the
sage, "This is a reported phishing
site." It also gives information on ph-
ng and on what your options are. Con-
ers can download a free test version i
Microsoft's Web site. The final ver-
which will have even more security
ares, will be available this fall. /lost
of these new tools are currently . But
some software companies, such
lymantec, are betting that they can
itually charge for software that rolls
ther a lot of features to keep people
online. Check Point's ZoneAlarm In-et
Security Suite 6.5, for one, which 5
\$69.95 but is available at a special ; of
\$49.95 now, and can be bought in ;s or
downloaded from Check Point's site,
includes traditional antivirus to clean
up your desktop. But it also ides new
features like warning you i your
credit-card number shows up black-
market Web site for identity es.

ophisticated hacking schemes can
jven savvy computer users. "I've ac-
tually downloaded viruses before,"
Sterling Camden, a 46-year-old soft-
consultant in Bainbridge Island, i.
Now, he uses a tool from McAfee d
SiteAdvisor.

Tien he searches the Internet using
le, the tool brings up one of four
; next to each search result. A green
> means the site is legitimate, a red
: means it probably isn't, a yellow
; means you should use caution, and
ay circle means McAfee doesn't
enough about the site to decide how
e it is. Dragging a mouse over the
brings up a box with more informa-
such as whether the site is known to
load malicious programs or could
you with junk email. "Having one
layer of protection can help," he

His only gripe: Some of his own
ess Web sites show up with gray

site called Scandoo from a San),
Calif., firm called ScanSafe Inc.
iffers a similar service without re-
ig you to download anything. Scan-
ategorizes Web sites so that a par-
earching for information on, say,
ge sex, can avoid stumbling onto a
graphy site. The site also sends
icon of a black spider with a red ts
back next to sites it has flagged
spicious.

ly Tidwell, of Golden, Colo., re-
grounded his 13-year-old daughter
using the Internet after he found le
had used the social-networking
ySpace while she was at a slumber
(She's too young to use MySpace,
dwell says.) "I watch my child very /
when she's on the Internet," Mr. 11
says, and he worries about what ight
stumble on during an innocent et
search. His daughter i&«way at er
camp now, but when she returns .n
use the computer again, Mr. Tid-
lans on making her use Scandoo.