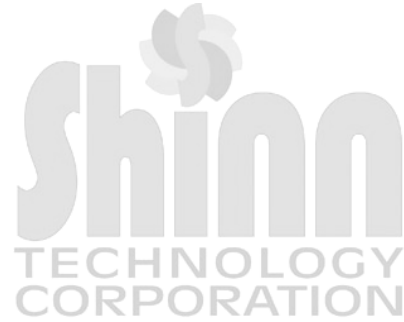


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**TITLE:            Spyware Information**

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## **What is Spyware?**

Also called adware, spyware applications are software programs that run on the computer that covertly gather user information through the user's Internet connection without his or her knowledge, usually for advertising purposes.

Spyware applications are typically bundled as a hidden component of freeware or shareware programs that can be downloaded from the Internet. Once installed, the spyware program monitors user activity on the Internet and transmits that information in the background through the user's Internet connection back to the creator of the spyware program. Spyware can also gather information about e-mail addresses and even passwords and credit card numbers.

## **What Does Spyware Do?**

Spyware is similar to a Trojan horse in that users unwittingly install the product when they install something else. A common way to become a victim of spyware is to download certain peer-to-peer file swapping products that are available today.

Aside from the questions of ethics and privacy, spyware steals from the user by using the computer's memory resources and also by eating bandwidth as it sends information back to the spyware's home base via the user's Internet connection. Because spyware is using memory and system resources, the applications running in the background can lead to system crashes or general system instability.

Because spyware exists as independent executable programs, they have the ability to monitor keystrokes, scan files on the hard drive, snoop other applications, such as chat programs or word processors, install other spyware programs, read cookies, change the default home page on the Web browser, consistently relaying this information back to the spyware author who will either use it for advertising/marketing purposes or sell the information to another party.

Licensing agreements that accompany software downloads sometimes warn the user that a spyware program will be installed along with the requested software, but this information is often "hidden" in very long, hard-to-read legal disclaimers that are part of the software's user agreement, or acceptable use policy (AUP).

## **How Do I Prevent Spyware?**

There are several programs out there that will detect spyware on a computer. Spybot Search & Destroy and Ad Aware are two very common programs that can find spyware and other types of hidden programs on the user's computer. A good firewall will also help you to identify and spyware that may be sending information out to the Internet. Windows XP comes with a built-in firewall, but XP's firewall does not monitor outbound traffic (leaving your computer to go to the Internet). There are many firewall programs available, with Kerio Personal Firewall or Zone Alarm being two of the many recommended firewalls by software reviewers. As mundane as it may seem, always read the AUP that accompanies the software that you have downloaded and are about to install. That way you will know ahead of time what the software is going to install on your machine.

### **Websites for more information**

[www.SpywareGuide.com](http://www.SpywareGuide.com)

[www.Zonelabs.com](http://www.Zonelabs.com)

[www.Safer-networking.org](http://www.Safer-networking.org)

[www.LavasoftUSA.com](http://www.LavasoftUSA.com)

[www.microsoft.com/athome/security/spyware/software/default.mspx](http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/spyware/software/default.mspx)