



From the Technology Trenches – Rick Bernauer, Senior Systems Consultant

It was a dark and stormy night as the legal secretary moved quickly down the street. She glanced into store windows; searching then moving on. She knew it was time to get back to work, but the prices seemed so good. Suddenly, a dark figure popped-up and asked if she'd like to win a fabulous vacation – she knew she shouldn't respond, but she did. She was trapped. She was lost. She was "hijacked."

Her internet browser no longer responded. It went to the wrong web sites (I mean really wrong) and dozens of annoying pop-up ads appeared whenever she tried to close the browser.

Browser Hijacking and other bad things lurk in the dark corners of the Internet. Hijacking program code is hidden in web sites. Your home page can be changed, favorites can be added, registry entries modified. Some hijack software makes entries to the HOSTS file which directly maps web URLs (www.microsoft.com) to IP addresses (207.46.120.108). Changes to this file can redirect a user to another web site, even a fake web site.

But there are things you can do to help protect yourself.

Use the Windows Update feature. Set your PC to automatically check for updates or manually check on a regular basis. Also, keep your Anti-Virus current and the virus definition file updated.

Change Internet Explorer Security settings to protect your system. Under Tools | Internet Options you can set your Internet Security to "High." This may cause problems with some sites. To solve this, place the URLs of all needed sites in your "Trusted Sites" list.

The most important rule is "Use common sense." Just as you wouldn't travel down certain streets without locking your car doors, don't browse to unknown or risky sites without making sure you're protected.

This month's Tech Tip: Windows – An easy method to determine how full your drive is: Right-click the drive icon in Explorer, or My Computer, and choose Properties.

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