**M & H CONSULTING**

THE M&H MONITOR

Stop This Spyware!!!

Many of you web surfers out there may have consistent problems with your computer slowing down over time. Why is that you ask? It's a brand new computer, top of the line. One cause for slow computers is spyware.

So what is spyware anyway? Spyware is software put on your computer (usually without your consent) which gathers information about your computer and browsing habits, and then sends you targeted adds and pop ups. Even worse, it can create a security weakness allowing more spyware or mal-ware to be put on your computer. Spyware is frequently mistaken for a virus. There are a few important differences. Viruses are directly harmful to your computer and generally try to spread themselves to other computers. Spyware, on the other hand, generally does not replicate itself, and is more annoying than harmful.

So what does spyware do? Spyware comes in many different types. Most of them are designed to generate money for the originator. Some do this by forcing your web browser to go to certain websites; some generate pop up ads trying to trick you into buying something you don't need. Trickier spyware may popup pretending to be a system message, an anti-spyware program, or an anti-virus program. The rule of thumb is: if you didn't ask for something to pop up, don't click it, just close the window (little red x in the top right). Unfortunately for you, spyware runs in the background hogging memory and processor time. This means the more spyware you have, the slower your computer will run.
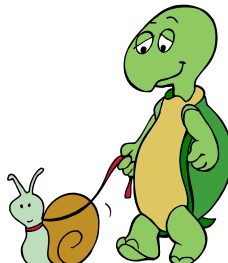
Ok, I have spyware, what do I do about it? Unless you are an IT professional with years of experience and in depth knowledge of operating systems and registries, you will not be able to eliminate spyware without help. Luckily for you there are plenty of tools out there to remove spyware and protect your system. Two of these pro-

grams are called Adaware and Spybot. Both are free for personal use, and work exceedingly well. While these programs will not keep spyware from getting on your system, they will remove the vast majority of them. You can download both of these products at www.download.com.

How do I prevent spyware from getting on my system in the first place? First, check your browser's security settings. The lower your security settings the more likely you are to get spyware. Second, be conscious of where you (and your employees) go online. Certain websites are more likely to give you spyware such as hacker and pornographic websites. Third, get some good anti-spyware software. There are anti-spyware programs that will run in the background and look for spyware as you use your computer. Webroot's Spysweeper is one such program. This can be purchased online at www.webroot.com. It normally runs around $30 per year. If you are having slow computer issues, and would like help in speeding your computer up, contact M&H Consulting at 866-964-8324.

Disaster Recovery Kit

What it is:

A disaster recovery kit contains any software that is business essential. It should include anything that would be needed to rebuild a server or workstation from the ground up in case of a system failure, building fire, etc. Installation CDs for the currently installed operating system, any special software such as accounting software or a customized database, and - importantly - detailed instructions on how to install all of that software. These instructions should be detailed enough so that any technician, not just the one who created the instructions, can follow them if needed. This kit should be kept off site, either at an employee's home or in a safe deposit box, so that it is accessible in case of an emergency. Another good idea is to have one of the backup tapes off site. This could be done with a normal 5 day backup rotation, having a 6th tape which is alternated. In this case, there would be two Friday

tapes, Friday 1 and Friday 2. After Friday's backup completes the tape would be alternated and the tape not in use would be stored off site.

This way, along with a recovery kit to get the server back up to spec, there is also a recent backup of data so it can be restored.

Why you want it:

Essentially, if any of the previously mentioned situations arise, the disaster recovery kit would allow a newly purchased workstation and/or server to be configured properly in the fastest manner possible. Hardware could be purchased locally and using the contents of the kit, the downed machine could be brought back to life. As we all know, time is money in the business world. Having one's system down for half a day instead of one or more days can make all the difference in the world.

"Annoyances aside, some of this pop-up ad technology IS impressive."