

StopBadware.org Labels RealPlayer Software as Badware

Two versions, two different badware behaviors

CAMBRIDGE, MA - 01/31/2008 - StopBadware.org, the consumer protection initiative developed to combat badware, today released an alert about RealNetworks, Inc.'s RealPlayer software application. The group found RealPlayer version 10.5 to be badware because of inadequate disclosure of advertising behavior and RealPlayer version 11 to be badware because it bundles an additional application without disclosure.

RealPlayer 11 is the current version of the application, offered on <http://www.real.com> as an internet video and multimedia player. RealPlayer 10.5 is an older version which is still widely distributed through such sites as BBC Radio and through the Firefox web browser's "missing plug-in" capability.

The report highlights two areas of concern:

- The Software does not fully, accurately, clearly, and conspicuously disclose the principal and significant features and functionality of the application prior to installation - The advertising software bundled with RealPlayer is misleadingly called a 'message center', and is described incompletely and inconspicuously in the EULA as software designed to provide useful software updates. When RealPlayer 10.5 is installed, the advertising features of this 'message center' are enabled by default for users who choose not to register their personal information with RealNetworks after the software is installed.
- Software installs deceptively - RealPlayer 11 does not disclose that it installs Rhapsody Player Engine, and does not remove this software when RealPlayer is uninstalled. Users are not informed by the installer or uninstaller of the connection between RealNetworks and Rhapsody Player Engine.

"Software producers have a responsibility to inform users, clearly and unambiguously, about what software will be installed on their computers and what it will do," said Maxim Weinstein, manager of StopBadware.org at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard Law School. "RealNetworks does not allow users to make an informed choice about how their computers will be used. We hope to see a new version of RealPlayer soon that addresses these concerns."

A full copy of the report can be found at <http://www.stopbadware.org/home/reports>.

To download a full copy of "StopBadware.org Labels RealPlayer Software as Badware," please follow this link.

About StopBadware.org

StopBadware.org is a nonprofit consumer protection initiative working to combat badware, including malicious software such as spyware, incessant pop-up ads, or other obtrusive

programs. StopBadware.org is led by Harvard Law School's Berkman Center for Internet & Society and Oxford University's Oxford Internet Institute. Consumer Reports WebWatch serves as an unpaid special advisor. The initiative is supported by Google, Lenovo, PayPal, and VeriSign. For more information, please visit <http://www.stopbadware.org>.