

Successful legal action against computer retailers protects consumers from the dangers of illegal software

Microsoft aims to reduce the risks that unlawful computer programs pose by educating local PC stores about the hazards of selling unauthorised software

Reading, UK, 7th May: Today, Microsoft announces success against computer retailers around the UK who have admitted to unlawfully trading in Microsoft software. Today's news reveals that ten computer shops have been found guilty, or admitted to dealing in counterfeit or unlicensed software* over a period of six months. This highlights that the illegal software trade is a big issue for consumers, who are put at risk when they unwittingly purchase illegal computer programs. Microsoft's aim is to protect these consumers, who are vulnerable to computer viruses and identity theft when they use this software, and to support genuine businesses whose livelihood is endangered by unscrupulous traders.

Stoke on Trent business guilty of trading in unlicensed software

Stoke on Trent based OneStopComputers Limited has faced court action and admitted to involvement in unlawful software activity including the sale of unlicensed software and hard disk loading*. The positive outcome of this case is that the Stoke on Trent business is now committed to working more closely with Microsoft to ensure they remain compliant and stop selling illegal software.

As Stephen Harvey from OneStopComputers Ltd comments: "We recognise that we were dealing with Microsoft software incorrectly and have since worked cooperatively with Microsoft to ensure this does not happen again. It's good to see Microsoft working with small, local resellers like ourselves to ensure that we are fully educated about the rules of software usage and remain compliant at all times."

In a further nine separate cases, the following PC retailers have each faced court action and admitted to involvement in unlawful software activity including the sale of unlicensed software and hard disk loading:

- Wicked Computers (Devon)
- Computer Shop (Birmingham)
- SupporTech (Newport)
- MP Computers (Dewsbury)
- Inspire Media Solutions (Falkirk)
- Powerpacks PC (Eastbourne)
- Whitchurch Computer Centre (Bristol)
- Director CTi Technology Ltd (Oldham)
- Andrew Largent (Ipswich, trading as himself)

Michala Wardell, Head of Anti Piracy at Microsoft UK, comments "Today's announcement indicates that illegal software is not just a top level, national problem but very much a local issue. Microsoft is determined to protect customers from the pitfalls of unlawful software and is committed to working with local businesses to convey the importance of selling genuine

computer programs. This latest success in clamping down on the sale of illegal software underlines just how important it is for Microsoft to work on a local level - it is our job to ensure customers are not being ripped off when they buy Microsoft computer programs. We have a duty to ensure that customers are given a good deal and are not unwittingly purchasing illegal software that puts them at risk from dangers such as computer viruses and identity theft.

By educating and informing local firms to ensure they are fully aware of the rights and wrongs when trading in Microsoft software, we can ensure that customers are not left out of pocket by illegal software trading. We want to help local computer firms operate in a legal and safe way and we believe that selling reliable, genuine software is the best way for them to keep their customers happy and their businesses profitable.

Unlawfully sold computer programs are a big problem in the UK - every year £250 million is lost from the British public purse, which means the government has a quarter of a billion pound less to spend on hospitals, schools and crime prevention. We must aim to stamp out the illegal software trade as it not only puts consumers at risk but also loses valuable government spending money on the things that matter the most. My advice to consumers when buying software is to always inspect the packaging first for genuine security marks."

Stoke on Trent City Council backs Microsoft's regional efforts

Microsoft's regional approach to educate local computer businesses about the dangers of selling illegal software and the consequences this has for their customers is also supported by Stoke on Trent City Council.

As Martyn Brindley, Head of Regulatory Services, Stoke on Trent City Council said, "Counterfeit products, software piracy and Intellectual Property theft cause substantial financial loss to computer retailers in our city. It's good to see that software companies such as Microsoft understand these dangers, as we do, and like ourselves are committed to educating and informing local PC retailers on the do's and don'ts of software trading and are doing something effective about it."

=ENDS=

Notes to Editor

Definitions

Unlicensed software

Unlicensed software is a common type of piracy. It happens when individuals and businesses make copies of software without a licence to do so. People may copy a program and give it to their friends/family without realising that this is software piracy.

Sometimes an organisation will install software on more computers than its licences allow. Aside from the financial harm this causes, it puts users at risk because they are using software without a licence.

Hard disk loading

Hard disk loading normally happens when builders of computer systems sell PCs with unlicensed software pre-installed. These dealers use one copy of a software program but install it illegally on many machines. The original disks and the documents that should come with the PC are often missing or incomplete. If they are supplied, they frequently turn out to be counterfeit.

About Microsoft

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realise their full potential.

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