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Surprise! Users Fall for Fake Virus Alerts

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The New York Times reported that “one in five recipients actually talks to the fake tech-support centers, and 6 percent ultimately pay the operators to “fix” the nonexistent problem, according to recent consumer surveys by Microsoft.” The November 28, 2018 report entitled “[That Virus Alert on Your Computer? Scammers in India May Be Behind It](#)” included these comments:

You know the messages. They pop up on your computer screen with ominous warnings like, “Your computer has been infected with a virus. Call our toll-free number immediately for help.”

Often they look like alerts from Microsoft, Apple or Symantec. Sometimes the warning comes in a phone call.

After the victims contacted the call center, the operator, pretending to be a Microsoft employee, would tell them that their system had been hacked or attacked by a virus. The victims would then be offered a package of services ranging from \$99 to \$1,000 to fix the problem

Microsoft, whose Windows software runs most personal computers, gets 11,000 or so complaints about the scams every month, ...and its internet monitors spot about 150,000 pop-up ads for the services every day. The company’s own tech-support forums, where people can publicly post items, also see a steady stream of posts offering fake tech-support services.

Although American authorities have busted such scams in places like Florida and Ohio, the backbone of the illicit industry is in India — in large part because of the country’s experience running so many of the world’s call centers.

So be careful about Virus Alerts!

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