

Microsoft seeking spyware trojan

Microsoft is investigating a trojan program that attempts to switch off the firm's anti-spyware software.

The spyware tool was only released by Microsoft in the last few weeks and has been downloaded by six million people. Stephen Toulouse, a security manager at Microsoft, said the malicious program was called Bankash-A Trojan and was being sent as an e-mail attachment. Microsoft said it did not believe the program was widespread and recommended users to use an anti-virus program. The program attempts to disable or delete Microsoft's anti-spyware tool and suppress warning messages given to users.

It may also try to steal online banking passwords or other personal information by tracking users' keystrokes.

Microsoft said in a statement it is investigating what it called a criminal attack on its software. Earlier this week, Microsoft said it would buy anti-virus software maker Sybari Software to improve its security in its Windows and e-mail software. Microsoft has said it plans to offer its own paid-for anti-virus software but it has not yet set a date for its release. The anti-spyware program being targeted is currently only in beta form and aims to help users find and remove spyware - programs which monitor internet use, causes advert pop-ups and slow a PC's performance.