

Bing ads to warn of online scams

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Microsoft worked with the US [Federal Trade Commission](#) (FTC), Postal Inspection Service, and Western Union to provide public service announcements (PSAs) in the form of advertising posted on relevant Bing results pages.

"We believe this program can help fight back against scams by reminding consumers to exercise their street smarts online right at the time they need it most," said [Microsoft](#) deputy general counsel Nancy

Anderson.

"Unfortunately, many scammers who would exploit a homeowner in danger of foreclosure or a person struggling with credit card debt will try to misuse the Internet to connect with their victims."

Targeted in the campaign are key words related to searches for information about foreclosure rescue offers; promises to fix credit problems, and "lottery scams" in which people are told they've won prizes but must pay to collect.

Links displayed along with search results will connect to trade commission or Microsoft Web pages with advice about avoiding scams and how to report cyber cons.

"Search-based public service announcements are powerful because they reach consumers at the teachable moment," said David Vladeck, director of the FTC bureau of consumer protection.

"We'll encourage other search engines to follow Microsoft's lead and use PSAs to help their users avoid scams."

For example, a [Bing](#) search regarding a supposed Microsoft lottery generated results that included a prominent link stating any such claim is a hoax.

"Obviously, these particular issues are not the only scams or fraud consumers might come across online, but they certainly are some of the more prevalent scams out there," Microsoft said in a release.

Last year, the trade commission received nearly 250,000 complaints of fraud in which intended victims were approached using the Internet, according to figures from Consumer Sentinel Network.

Bogus email claiming to be a notice of underreported income from the US Internal Revenue Service is being used to spread a computer virus on the Internet, officials at the US Computer Emergency Readiness Team warned Monday.

A file attached to the email plants malicious software in computers if it is opened, according to CERT.

People should not click on links or open files in unsolicited emails, even if they claims to be from tax collectors, CERT said.

Advice for spying online scams includes being suspicious of generic email introductions such as "Dear Customer" or urgent messages that demand immediate responses.

Clues of likely fraud include misspellings in messages and requests for personal or financial information, and links to online addresses that aren't consistent with whom emails claim to be from, according to Microsoft.

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