

US charges firms with deception on computers (Update)

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(AP)—U.S. regulators have charged 14 firms and 17 people with impersonating major companies to trick consumers into thinking their computers were plagued by viruses so they could charge hundreds of dollars to fix the problems.

The Federal Trade Commission said Wednesday the action was part of a new international crackdown on such tech-support scams. The agency says a federal judge in New York City has issued an order halting six alleged scams and freezing their assets.

The FTC says the telemarketing schemes mostly operate from India and target English-speaking consumers in the U.S., Britain, Canada, Australia, Ireland and New Zealand.

The agency says the telemarketers claimed they worked for companies such as Microsoft and Dell, saying they had detected a virus or malware. They offered to fix the problems remotely for \$49 to \$450.

The FTC alleged in lawsuits filed in New York that the companies and individuals violated a federal law prohibiting unfair and deceptive practices, and the agency's telemarketing sales rule. They also illegally called phone numbers listed on the Do Not Call Registry, the FTC said. It said the companies used 80 different computer domain names and 130 phone numbers to avoid detection by law enforcement authorities.

The agency is seeking unspecified restitution for the affected consumers.

The firms named in the suits are Pecon Software Ltd., Pecon Infotech Ltd., Pecon Software UK Ltd., PCCare247 Inc., PCCare247 Solutions Pvt Ltd., Connexxions Infotech Inc., Connexxions IT Services Pvt Ltd., Zeal IT Solutions Pvt Ltd., Lakshmi Infosoul Services Pvt Ltd., Finmaestros LLC, New World Services Inc., MegaBites Solutions LLC, Greybytes Cybertech P. Ltd. and Shine Solutions Private Ltd.

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