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AARP Fraud Watch Network Targets the ‘Tech Support Scam’

Sophisticated, but Fake, Pop-Up Alerts Being Used to Dupe Consumers Nationwide

WASHINGTON, DC—With people being victimized at an alarming rate by fraudulent pop-up messages that warn computer users of a purported virus infection or urgently needed repair, the [AARP Fraud Watch Network](#) has launched a major campaign to raise awareness of the “Tech Support Scam.”

Newly launched advertising, social media content and an online [video](#) invite people to visit the Fraud Watch Network’s webpage, www.aarp.org/TechScams, to learn about the latest scam tactics. A [booklet](#) co-published by AARP and Microsoft Corp., “*Avoiding Tech Support Scams*,” may be downloaded from the site and shared with family and loved ones.

The Tech Support Scam has cost computer users worldwide an estimated \$1.5 billion, according to a [study](#) by Microsoft. The Federal Trade Commission and federal, state and international partners this month launched “[Operation Tech Trap](#),” a major crackdown on tech support scammers.

“Make no mistake about it: these thieves are good at what they do. It’s easy to be fooled,” said AARP Chief Executive Officer Jo Ann Jenkins in a new [blog article](#). “Everyone is a vulnerable target -- from tweens and teens to boomers and seniors.”

While fraudsters execute the [Tech Support Scam](#) via telephone or email, they increasingly are utilizing computer pop-up ads. Appearing as if it originated from Apple, Microsoft or another technology company, the frightening pop-up informs a targeted person that a virus or some other security problem has been detected on the victim’s computer. Once you call the provided “helpline” number, the scammers may:

- Ask you to give them remote access to your computer and then make changes to your settings that could leave your computer vulnerable;
- Try to enroll you in a worthless computer maintenance or warranty program;
- Ask for credit card information so they can bill you for phony services – or services you could get elsewhere for free;
- Trick you into installing malware that could steal sensitive data, like usernames and passwords; and
- Direct you to websites and ask you to enter your credit card number and other personal information.

For a list of “dos” and “don’ts” and more information about the Tech Support Scam, visit www.aarp.org/TechScams.

Computer users who are targeted by this fraud scheme are urged to report it to the [Federal Trade Commission](#) and the FBI’s [Internet Crime Complaint Center](#).

The [AARP Fraud Watch Network](#) was launched in 2013 as a free resource for people of all ages. The website provides information about fraud and scams, prevention tips from experts, an interactive [scam-tracking map](#), fun educational quizzes, and video presentations featuring Fraud Watch Network Ambassador [Frank Abagnale](#). Users may sign up for “Watchdog Alert” emails that deliver breaking scam information, or call a free helpline at 877-908-3360 to speak with volunteers trained in fraud counseling.

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About AARP

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million that helps people turn their goals and dreams into 'Real Possibilities' by changing the way America defines aging. With staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and promote the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare security, financial security and personal fulfillment. AARP also advocates for individuals in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the world’s largest circulation magazine, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org or follow @aarp and our CEO @JoAnn_Jenkins on Twitter.
