Autorun-based threats account for 12 per cent of global infections in Q1 2012

Threats persist despite years of software updates

SYDNEY & AUCKLAND – May 2, 2012 – More than fouryears after Autorun was eliminated from operating systems, worms that takeadvantage of the antiquated feature account for more than 1 of every 10computer infections worldwide, according to Bitdefender research. Autorun-based threats, spread when users insert infected USB stickswithout checking them for viruses, caused a substantial 12 per cent of globalinfections in the first quarter of 2012. The threat persists even though theAutorun feature was eliminated from operating systems starting with WindowsVista SP1 in 2008.

“The magnitude of this threat – so many years after it should be extinct– is astonishing,” said Catalin Cosoi, Bitdefender’s Chief Security Researcher.“Some of the heavy-hitters of the virus world – such as Downadup and Stuxnet –spread this way. Prevention should be a simple matter.”

The mass introduction of USB storage devices and the apparition of theAutorun feature in Windows have been widely exploited since the early 2000s.Within five years, Autorun worms reached epidemic proportions autorun-basedthreats have dominated the malware landscape report since.

USB Immunizer: Tell Viruses Where to Stick It

Bitdefender, the innovative provider of computer security solutions, hasfinished an overhaul of its USB Immunizer, which disables autorun-relatedthreats before they access the computer and makes your USB stick immune to suchmalicious behaviour.

“You never know for certain where a USB stick may have been. It is alwaysworth checking,” said Adina Jipa, Product Marketing Manager of Bitdefender USBImmunizer. “A simple, and free, solution is available to a persistent naggingproblem.”

New functions to make it easy to immunise multiple sticks or storagedevices at once and an intuitive interface that lets you click and immunise areamong the upgrades Bitdefender carried out in its first makeover of USBImmunizer. Bitdefender's cutting edge security technology ensures it's alwaysupdated against the latest threats.

5 facts about Autorun-based malware:

1.The Autorun.inf file is not malicious itself. Itis used by some families of malware that copy themselves on USB sticks to forcethe computer to automatically execute them when an infected stick is pluggedinto a Windows-based PC.

2.Among the most important families of malwarethat use the Autorun exploitation to spread are Stuxnet, Downadup, Sality,Rimecud or OnlineGames.

3.Autorun-based malware can copy itself on MP3/MP4players, mobile phones, CF cards (such as those in digital cameras) and otherdevices. When plugged in other PCs, the malware is executed automatically.

4.Since autorun.inf files are plain-text filesthat can be opened and analysed, malware creators obfuscate their creations tomake them unreadable by humans. However, this is also their weak point. Thisdegree of obfuscation is uncommon in text files and triggers AV detection.

5.Trojan.AutorunInf (a detection that interceptsrogue autorun.inf files) has been the number one source of infection for morethan three years in a row. During this time, it has helped various malwarefamilies infect millions of computers worldwide.

For a full description of the advantages and options of Bitdefender USBImmunizer, see: www.bitdefender.com.au/freetools/.

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About Bitdefender

Bitdefenderis the creator of one of the world's fastest and most effective lines ofinternationally certified internet security software. Since 2001, thecompany has been an industry pioneer, introducing and developing award-winningprotection. Today, Bitdefender technology secures the digital experience ofaround 400 million home and corporate users across the globe.

Recently,the company has won a range of key independent recommendations in the US, UKand across Europe, including ConsumerSearch, Which?, Stiftung Warentest andTaenk. Bitdefender antivirus technology hasalso finished top in leading industry tests from both AV Test andAV-Comparatives. More information about Bitdefender's antivirus products is available from the company's securitysolutions press room. Additionally, Bitdefender publishes Malware City providing the latest updates onsecurity threats and helping users stay informed in the everyday battle againstmalware.