

Beware Trojan Horses Bearing Free AOL

Editorial Staff

It started as just another hoax, but now someone has taken the AOL4free fiasco to a new, more sinister level. The hoax began back in June of 1995, when a Yale student named Nicholas Ryan created a program that let people sign onto American Online free of charge (Ryan has since been tried and is serving time under house arrest).

Rumors began flying that Ryan's program ("AOL4free.com") was actually a computer virus that would delete files and create havoc with your computer system. After several months, it was determined that the rumors were false. The message that AOL4free.com was safe went out to relieved Internet users worldwide.

But the saga continues. Some perverse individual(s) created a program with the same name that does delete files. This new version of AOL4free.com is not a computer virus, but a Trojan horse program: a destructive program disguised as a useful one. You don't need a special program or patch to protect yourself. Simply scan your hard drive for a AOL4free.com file; if you find one, just erase it. And if you receive an e-mail attachment with that file name, delete the message without opening it.

NOVEMBER 1997