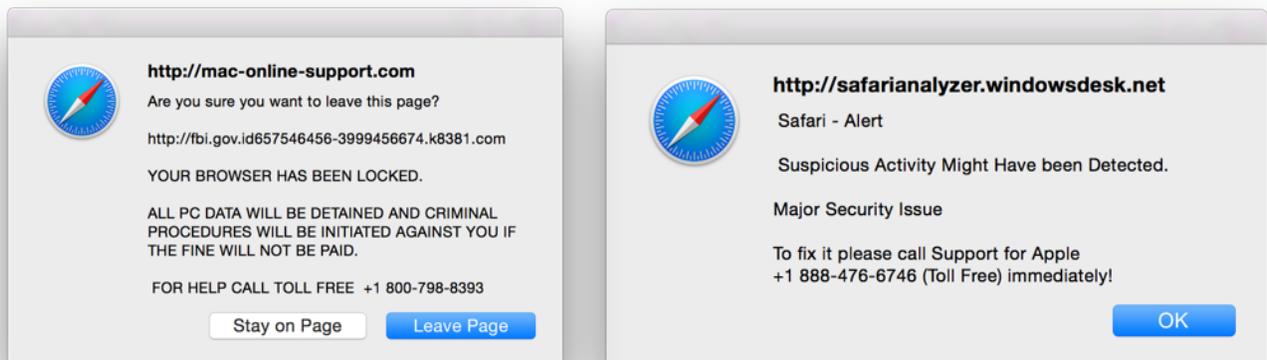


EMERGENCY MAC MALWARE WARNING!!

In the last three weeks I have had several customers call me reporting having a window such as this pop up when using Safari or another internet browser:



DO NOT CALL THE PHONE NUMBER UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES!!!

These are examples of a scam that is trying at the very least to extort money from you, and at worst open your computer up to a true malware infection. If you get a popup like this and you are using Safari it will likely lock your browser in a loop that you will not be able to get out of. Don't panic, the solution is relatively simple.

- First, you need to **Force Quit** Safari. Simply click on the Apple logo in the upper left corner of your screen, then go down and select "Force Quit". You will be presented with a window with a list of all the programs that are currently running. Select Safari and then click on the "Force Quit" button in the lower right corner of the window.
- Next, hold down the "**Shift**" key while launching Safari. This should present you with your home page.
- Click on "Safari" up next to the Apple logo in the upper left corner of your screen, then slide down and select "**Reset Safari**" (Mac OS X 10.9 Mavericks and earlier). Make sure ALL items are selected and click "Reset". You will lose all saved data except Bookmarks/Favorites, but it is the only sure way to eradicate this problem. If you are running OS X 10.10 Yosemite, select "**Clear History and Website Data**", then select a time before the popup first occurred. I usually go back at least a day. Finally, go to Safari>Preferences>General and verify that your Home Page is what you expect. If not, change it back to what you want, and then restart Safari.

If you **HAVE CALLED** the number displayed and allowed a "tech" remote access to your computer, then things are A LOT WORSE - you have potentially been compromised, and need to **CALL ME IMMEDIATELY at 406-253-2500!** We may have to restore from a recent backup, or install a fresh copy of the Operating System and then selectively restore programs and user data. I would also consider changing key passwords, and contacting your credit card company to have them void the charges. We then need to install an anti-virus and malware program - AVG Anti-Virus for Mac (free) is my current favorite.

Do realize that what has happened in this case is not a "virus" infection, which the Mac is still largely immune from, but rather a "malware" attack that has inadvertently been enabled by your actions. You are not alone in this - it was likely a perfectly innocent search that took you to an "infected" website. The scammers know how to use social engineering to entice victims and make them feel like they have somehow done something "wrong", increasing the chance that they will be paid.

Finally, BE WARY of anyone requesting information over the internet, just as you would be a fishy-sounding phone solicitor. In fact, I have also received reports of phone solicitation from foreign-sounding "technicians" telling people that their computer is infected and trying to scare people into purchasing the same kind of "service" that this pop-up does.

If in doubt on the status of your computer, call me to schedule a check-up and inoculation. It is always a moving target, and while Macs are far safer than Windows machines have historically been, the bad guys are getting more resourceful every day.