Ten Tips for Safe Software Shopping

Internet auctions are one of the most popular destinations on the Web today. They provide an electronic forum to sell, and bid upon, virtually any consumer product or collectible imaginable. But they are also a popular venue through which software pirates move their illicit wares. BSA estimates that a high percentage of the software sold on auction sites is pirated.

Here are 10 helpful hints on how to ensure you are purchasing legal software on auction sites:

- **Trust Your Instincts.** Software pirates typically defraud bidders by claiming that their software is a genuine product obtained at a deep discount through wholesale channels, liquidated inventories or bankruptcy sales. Check the online seller's price against the estimated retail value of the software. Whether it is being sold as new or used, if a price for software seems too good to be true, it probably is.

- **Make Sure It's Authentic.** Be suspicious of software products that do not include proof of authenticity such as original disks, manuals, licensing, service policies, warranties, etc. Ask the seller to indicate where he or she purchased the software and to provide the necessary documentation.

- **Read the Label.** Beware of products that do not look genuine such as those with hand-written labels. Watch out for products labeled as academic, OEM, NFR or CDR.

- **Beware of Back-Ups.** Take special care to avoid sellers offering to make "back-up" copies or citing Section 117 of the Copyright Act. This is a clear indication that the software is illegal.

- **Steer Clear of Compilations.** Be wary of compilations of software titles from different publishers on a single disk.

- **Do Your Homework.** Check the feedback section on the auction site to find comments about the seller based on previous transactions. Keep in mind that a clean complaint record doesn't always ensure that you will receive genuine product.

- **Get the Seller's Address, If Possible.** Remember that if you cannot re-contact the seller, you may have no recourse if the product turns out to be pirated.

- **Keep Receipts.**   Print out a copy of your order number and sales confirmation and keep them at least until your software arrives in satisfactory condition.

- **Be Careful When Crossing the Border.**   Be especially cautious when dealing with software sellers in other countries. If you become the victim of software fraud, the physical distance, differences in legal systems and other factors could complicate matters if the transaction goes awry.

- **Report Piracy.**   Buyers suspecting software piracy, counterfeit software and/or fraud on auction sites should contact law enforcement agencies and BSA at 1-888-NOPIRACY or www.bsa.org.