

CompuTrace Executive Summary

CompuTrace, developed by Absolute Software, is a security monitoring and recovery system for lost or stolen personal computers. The software has a monitoring site that tracks computer assets 24 hours a day. The software reports the location of the computer silently and undetected at a set period of time each day under normal operations. The software provides a procedure to report stolen computers in addition to a report-writing feature that provides information on the user's computer inventory assets protected by CompuTrace software.

CompuTrace was evaluated at the SEWPC lab during May 2000.

The CompuTrace software was evaluated to assess the suitability of the product for general Government use. The product was reviewed to test the following vendor claims: the software is tamperproof, is Internet-centric, has robust monitoring capabilities, is transparent and dependable, has enterprise-wide applicability, can operate on machines using file and directory encryption, is compatible with major imaging software, and is device-interoperable.

In SEWPC testing, seven (7) of the eight (8) vendor claims were substantiated. One of the claims was not substantiated. The claim that the software is tamperproof was found to be somewhat overstated.

The vendor has been provided the opportunity to comment on this report before publication.

The complete SEWPC CompuTrace report is available to authorized US government employees. To request a copy, send an email to: sewpsc_reports@sewp.nasa.gov. Please include a contact name, Agency name, phone number, and fax number in your email.

Text Matrix

Claim Evidence Results	Substantiated	Not Substantiated
1. Tamperproof		X
2. Internet-centric	X	
3. Monitoring	X	
4. Transparent/Dependable	X	
5. Enterprise-wide applicability	X	
6. Encryption	X	
7. Imaging software tested	X	
8. Device interoperability		

Absolute Software Vendor Comments

We acknowledge and agree that the CompuTrace software can be disabled in the event of a low level re-formatting of the hard drive with special utilities or with the re-installation of Windows NT. This information was given to the appropriate contacts at NASA before SEWP testing occurred. The claims that the company previously made in its literature about CompuTrace describe it as "tamperproof" rather than the more accurate descriptor of "tamper-resistant", and are being changed to reflect the latter.

It is useful to point out that the CompuTrace program did survive attempts at discovery, file deletion, and the commonly used methods of re-formatting. It is also worth noting that most personal computer thieves do not have access to, or the knowledge required, to use third party, low level formatting utilities to disable the software. In addition, because of the password protection features of Windows NT, most thieves will remove NT from the stolen machine in order to re-sell it. However, they usually install Windows 98 in place of NT, as it is more appealing to most buyers of stolen PCs. CompuTrace software remains active if Windows 95 or 98 is installed in place of NT.