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## **Microsoft goes after Windows Scareware that tries to Pressure You for Payment**

An application purportedly scans your PC and finds multiple instances of "errors." These programs then promise to clean up your PC. But the catch is, you have to pay to "fix" the problem. Microsoft wants to put an end to this. "There has been an increase in free versions of programs that purport to scan computers for various errors, and then use alarming, coercive messages to scare customers into buying a premium version of the same program," Barak Shein, with Microsoft's Windows Defender Security Research, wrote in a blog post this week. These programs, generically referred to as "cleaner" or "optimizer" applications, claim to fix a problem detected by the free version if a user pays for a premium version of the software. This can pressure customers into "making unnecessary purchase decisions," Microsoft said. Kevin Haley, director of security response at Norton by Symantec, noted that many of them charged between \$30 and \$90 for a license to fix the so-called issue. "In reality, many of them did not fix anything," he said. Starting March 1, Windows Defender Antivirus and other Microsoft security products will detect and remove programs with coercive messages, Shein added. "We of course do not want to block customers from running legitimate programs on their computers [but] it can be difficult to separate incompetent from attempts to deceive," said Haley, whose company offers anti-virus software and other security products.