

For those of you who have an illegal version of Windows 7 you may want to pay attention. Microsoft is set to send out an update that will detect your hacked version of Windows 7 and end your free ride. Windows Activation Technologies (WAT), formerly known as Windows Genuine Advantage, will get an update next week that will check license validation on Windows 7, aiming to remove known activation cracks and certify that copies are legit. Microsoft says that it's for your own protection, we are sure all of you are happy to hear this.

Microsoft will release an update to WAT, on February 16, when it is available online, and push this to everyone later this month, that will validate Windows 7 licenses and "...detect more than 70 known and potentially dangerous activation exploits. Activation exploits are sometimes called 'hacks', and attempt to bypass or compromise Windows' activation technologies. This new update is further evidence of Microsoft's commitment to keeping customers and partners secure. The update will determine whether Windows 7 installed on a PC is genuine and will better protect customers' PCs by making sure that the integrity of key licensing components remains intact," says Joe Williams, general manager of Worldwide Genuine Windows at Microsoft.

This will be listed as an "Important" update. After you install your computer will call the great Microsoft mother ship every 90 days to make sure you are still legal. Sounds fun huh. "If Windows 7 is non-genuine, the notifications built into Windows 7 will inform the customer that Windows is not genuine by displaying informational dialog boxes with options for the customer to either get more information, or acquire genuine Windows. The desktop wallpaper will be switched to a plain desktop (all of the customer's desktop icons, gadgets, or pinned applications stay in place). Periodic reminders and a persistent desktop watermark act as further alerts to the customer...When tampering, disabling, or missing licensing files are discovered, the WAT Update runs a check and repair weekly to ensure that the licensing files are properly repaired," Williams explained.

This install is optional and you can continue to get updates and not install this one, but for those who don't know their PC will start to phone home this month. Surprisingly, there's no catch, at least not yet. If you don't install the patch, you will still be permitted to download other Windows updates. It's unclear whether the fixes will be present in Windows 7 Service Pack 1, in which case you won't have a choice.