From: "Microsoft Office News"
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Subject: New Patches Address Privacy Concerns

We are sending you this special newsletter alert to address reports that you may have heard recently about the privacy of your Microsoft Office 97 documents. These reports have speculated that hardware identification data that is inadvertently transmitted to Microsoft during registration of Windows 98 could hypothetically be related to unique identifier numbers in Office 97 documents.

In fact, these issues are not related. We want to assure you that your privacy is not at all compromised by the existence of unique identifier numbers in Office. The unique identifier generated for Office 97 documents contains information that is derived in part from a network card, not from an individual user's identity, and thus it is not possible to reliably determine the author of a document.

The Office 97 technology enabling insertion of a unique identification number into documents so that they can be referenced on a network is unrelated to the Windows registration process. These two numbering systems never converge.

Even though this scenario is purely hypothetical, Microsoft is absolutely committed to protecting customers' privacy and has moved immediately to address the matter. Get all the details in our letter to customers at:
<http://www.microsoft.com/presspass/features/1999/03-08custletter2.htm>

Because we want to ensure that customers feel comfortable with the privacy of their Office 97 documents, Microsoft has decided to help users remove the unique identifier number from documents. As of next week, the following free patches will be available for you to download* from the Office Update Web site:

--Office 97 Unique Identifier Patch
This patch, once applied, will prevent the insertion of a unique identifier number in all new Office documents.

--Office 97 Unique Identifier Removal Tool
This is a utility that can be used to remove the unique identifier from previously created Office 97 documents.

Just go to the Office Update home page to find links to these new downloads:
<http://officeupdate.microsoft.com/>

By way of background, the purpose of the unique identifier number is to help independent developers build tools to work with and reference Office 97 documents (e.g., applications that help repair hyperlinks between Office documents). But the unique identifier number has not been widely used by these third parties. So, in addition to offering the above patches that will help customers eliminate unique identifiers in Office 97 documents, Microsoft has determined that the forthcoming release of Office 2000 will not include the ability to insert these numbers in documents.

Microsoft has a strong commitment to your privacy with respect to Microsoft software, and we know that privacy matters a great deal to our customers as well. Thanks for your attention, and please do consult our Web site for further information. Again, for details and download instructions on the Office 97 Unique Identifier Patch and the Office 97 Unique Identifier Removal Tool, go to:
<http://officeupdate.microsoft.com/>

And for a more complete understanding of the Windows 98 online registration issue (unrelated to the new

Office 97 patches), go to:
<http://www.microsoft.com/presspass/features/1999/03-08custletter2.htm>

The Microsoft Office Team

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*Please note that these are English language patches. For information about localization of the patches, just go to the Office Update home page and follow the appropriate links:
<http://officeupdate.microsoft.com/>

Please also note that for any download, Internet Service Provider charges may apply.

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