

What is 360 Safe Browser?

If you have ever used one of your Chinese colleagues computers, you have probably encountered a web-browser that looked like Internet Explorer, but definitely was not.



This is the Qihoo 360 Safe Browser, the most ubiquitous web-browser in china

Developed in 2011, it quickly became a favorite among Chinese users and in Nov. 2012 surpassed Microsoft IE as the most used browser in China (57% of China Internet surfers). Advertised as a safer alternative to Internet Explorer, it comes bundled with a number of other free software (Anti-Virus, Chat, Etc) and advertising platforms (Adware).

While not intentionally malicious the software brings with it frequent advertising pop-ups, online activity trackers, and is *very* difficult to remove after it has been installed. For IT Professionals the software causes conflicts with Paid-for Anti-Virus Clients, and the bundled software can remove security features common to Corporate Networks (Active Directory)

Some of the Risks when using 360 Safe Browser Include:

Ad Pop-Ups:

At start-up and through-ought the day users will encounter advertising Pop-ups even when not browsing the internet. These products can range from cosmetics to automobiles, and the revenue from these ads makes up the largest portion of the Qihoo's revenue (\$35.1 million USD reported in the third quarter of 2011).

Activity Tracking:

Users will encounter re-routing of links to other sites after the browser has identified browsing habits and selected appropriate products from their advertisers. The Qihoo CFO, Zuoli Xu, mentioned this specifically as one of their major successes in an [iChinaStock interview](#) "We have exploited our big share in the browser market by inserting an intelligent tracking program into our browsers that can track the habits and hobbies of each individual user, and then re-route links that suit the user's interest."

Fake Warning Messages:

At any-time a warning message appears in Internet Explorer (ex. Security Certificate Warning) 360 Browser pops-up saying that this problem would not have happened with 360 Safe Browser. At which point the user is prompted to change 360 to the default browser.

Blocks users from changing the default browser:



If a user tries to change the default browser in windows, 360 Safe brings up numerous warning messages that the selected software is less secure than 360 regardless of the software chosen. And after the change, 360 will pop-up with another error indicating that it cannot allow the other browser to become the default browser. To stop this, the 360 Safe Browser (and all of the other 360 software products) must be removed.

Incompatible with Corporate AV (Symantec/McAfee):

Will not allow Browsing Safety features (Password/Identify Protection/ Safe Search) from other software to function when using 360 Safe Browser.

Very difficult to un-install:

The software Un-Install wizard does not have a working feature to remove the software and change the default browser. It must be manually removed and requires an advanced understanding of the Windows OS to do so.



Is it appropriate for my Company's Computers?

*While acceptable for personal use, 360 Safe Browser is **Not an Acceptable** alternative to Internet Explorer or Chrome in a Corporate Environment: Due to its incompatibility with paid for Anti-Virus Clients, Forced Advertising Features, and Difficulty in Configuration & Removal (especially for non-Chinese speakers).*

A special thank you to Digital Due Diglligence for their original article on the Rise of 360 Safe Browser in China ([Qihoo Browser War](#)), and iChinaStockReview for their Interview with Zuoli Xu Qihoo CFO ([Qihoo CFO Interview](#))