

Microsoft Sues LI Computer Reseller

By Randi Feigenbaum

STAFF WRITER

For the second time in two years, Microsoft Corp. has charged a Ronkonkoma computer reseller with pirating its software, including Windows 95.

After settling one piracy case with Ronkonkoma's Computer World International last year, Microsoft said yesterday it received in May a federal court contempt order against the computer reseller for additional violations.

Computer World International is among five companies that Microsoft sued in U.S. District Court for New York's Eastern District. Microsoft contends its investigators discovered software that had been illegally copied and sold at "swap meets" — computer shows where resellers sell discounted packages of hardware and software.

Representatives from Computer World International did not return calls for comment yesterday. Jim Lowe, Microsoft's corporate counsel, said Microsoft had settled a similar case with the company, then named General Computer Co., in 1996. A

Accused of software piracy for 2nd time in two years

hearing on the new violations will be held on Aug. 27 to determine damages.

"We had a settlement and they violated it," Lowe said. "Our investigators went back and they were still doing it."

Lowe said that earlier this year, undercover investigators working for Microsoft discovered products being sold illegally at nine computer shows in the area, sponsored by MarketPro, based in Upper Saddle River, N.J., and by Tri State New England, in Avon, Conn.

Tri State New England show manager Wayne Cogan, however, says his company does not sponsor computer shows in New York or New Jersey. He said he has never seen piracy at his events. Microsoft contends that Tri State New England is the parent company of Tri State Fairs, based in Old-

wick, N.J. Cogan denied that.

A MarketPro representative said the company has always cooperated with Microsoft in the past. "We discourage and prohibit any acts of piracy at our shows," said the representative, who asked not to be named.

Microsoft alleges that investigators discovered two forms of piracy at those shows. One method, known as "hard-disk loading," involves selling a computer that has illegally copied software installed on it. The second method is simply selling the counterfeit software directly, where "the whole package is a knock-off," Lowe said. Most of the pirated software was counterfeit versions of the Windows 95 operating system.

Besides Computer World International, Microsoft has filed lawsuits against General Computer Professional Corp. of Manhattan, C&H Computers of White Plains and Com Depot Inc. and MSI Computers & Systems, both of Brooklyn. Microsoft settled out of court with seven other vendors selling pirated software.