

Subject: **Prevention against Fake WhatsApp on Google Play Store (Advisory No. 20) November, 2017**

1. **Introduction.** Google Play Store is surrounded by hundreds of fake and malicious apps that trick users into downloading and installing them and potentially infect their smart phones to carry out malicious things without their knowledge. Recently, a fake version of the most popular WhatsApp messaging app for Android has been spotted by some users. The app named **Update WhatsApp Messenger** was uploaded on the official Google Play Store by an app developer who pretended to be the actual WhatsApp service with the developer title "WhatsApp Inc."—the same title the actual WhatsApp messenger uses on Google Play.

2. **Technique Used.** The app developer was able to use the same title as the legitimate maker of the WhatsApp by adding a Unicode character space after the actual WhatsApp Inc. name, which in computer code reads **WhatsApp+Inc%C2%A0**. This hidden character space at the end of the WhatsApp Inc. was invisible to an average Android user browsing Google Play Store, allowing this dodgy version of the app to masquerade as a product of WhatsApp Inc.

3. **Mode of Operation.** The app once downloaded will perform following actions:-  
a. Serve Android users with advisements to download other apps.  
b. The app will try to hide by not having a title and having a blank icon.

4. **Recommendations.** In order to prevent user's data from being vulnerable to theft, the following is suggested.  
a. Vigilantly download apps not only from the third-party app store but also from official Play Store in order to protect yourselves.  
b. Backup your files regularly.  
c. Scan system regularly with antivirus such as Kaspersky, Avira , Avast, ESET etc.