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## Hotfile Goes To War Against Copyright Infringers

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Hotfile, one of the rising stars on the file-hosting scene, appears to be taking a tougher stance on copyright infringement. Perhaps with an eye on the litigation recently instigated by the MPAA, this week Hotfile has been deleting premium accounts – along with all their files – en masse. Furthermore, Hotfile are reportedly not paying out the money these accounts have earned in the site's rewards program.

As bandwidth and storage capacity have increased, so have the capabilities of file-hosting services. Perhaps inevitably, not only are they used for the storage personal files, but increasingly for the distribution of movies, music, games and software.

Although the MPAA and RIAA have named two of the market leaders – RapidShare and MegaUpload – as 'rogue', to date both sites have avoided becoming a target for litigation from the pair. The same cannot be said about Hotfile.

"In less than two years, Hotfile has become one of the 100 most trafficked sites in the world," said the MPAA when announcing its lawsuit against the company. "That is a direct result of the massive digital theft that Hotfile promotes."

Furthermore, the MPAA insists that Hotfile's business model encourages users to upload "illegal copies of motion pictures and TV shows to its servers." Even if this statement is true – and there's no evidence presented thus far to prove it is – a development this week suggests that Hotfile is taking its DMCA responsibilities seriously.

"Those idiots closed my Hotfile account," one premium account holder told TorrentFreak earlier today. "No warning and now i'm just shut out. All my files are gone, everything."

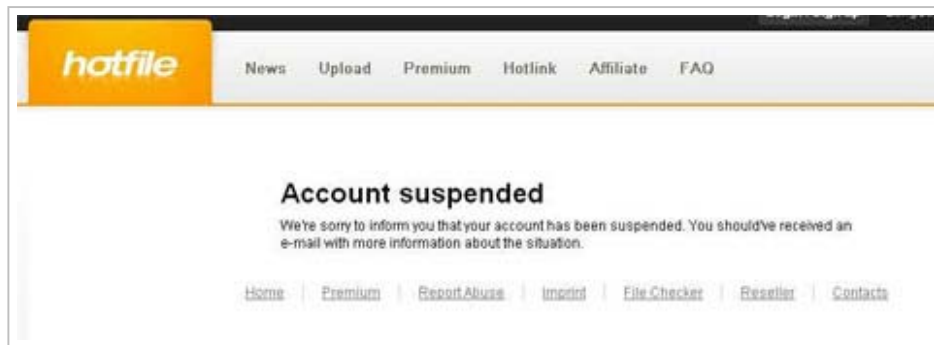


This is clearly not an isolated incident. On the contrary, recent Hotfile account suspensions are widespread. This morning TorrentFreak was invited to a private IRC channel and there we had a chat with individuals who had all lost premium accounts this week.

In our discussions with these and other people affected by the account suspensions, a common theme was developing. All had been operating premium accounts at Hotfile for some time, some of them for two years. Movies and TV shows were the major items being uploaded and all individuals were being paid weekly through Hotfile's reward program.

Then this week they were all locked out of their accounts, only to be greeted by the following message:

### Suspended



Although the above message promises account holders more information by email, the truth is that the message being sent says very little indeed.

### Terminated



Hotfile aren't answering any questions on the matter which is fairly normal since Hotfile rarely respond to any questions, their account holders tell us. Nevertheless, it is very clear that not only are the accounts closed, but all the files stored in them have been deleted too.

Another issue especially annoying to premium account holders is that they say that Hotfile owes them money earned in their rewards program. These are not always small amounts. Although we have spoken with people owed between \$15 and \$400, one individual says that he is owed more than \$1,000.

A source told TorrentFreak that when it comes to taking down infringing files, Hotfile are one of the fastest file-hosters to do so, but these mass aggressive account suspensions are something new. For their part, Hotfile say that they have always terminated the accounts of users who have repeatedly infringed copyright since their Terms of Service forbid users from doing so. However, it appears that they will now go further.

"Recently, we have become concerned that despite these policies, some users persist in attempting to use Hotfile.com to share materials to which they do not have the necessary rights," the company said in a statement. "Therefore, we have implemented a more aggressive policy of terminating the accounts of users who are the subject of repeated complaints of infringement."

In the face of this more aggressive stance by Hotfile, TorrentFreak is informed that UserShare.net and FileSonic could be favored by those we spoke with earlier, although there are dozens of alternatives ready to take up the slack.