

President's Corner: April, 2014
Windows XP: The End is Near
By Eric Moore

Microsoft has dropped support for Windows XP as of April 8, 2014. What this means is that support and security updates for Windows XP are no longer available from Microsoft. Of particular concern is that any unknown or unpatched security weaknesses will become easy targets for criminals and hackers to gain access to and control of unsuspecting users' computers. Because of the increased risk of continuing to use Windows XP, experts recommend a number of remedies to protect yourself.

Pull the Plug

At the very least, experts recommend not connecting to the Internet with Windows XP. This will protect against hackers, malware (viruses, bots, and Trojans), drive-by-downloads, and malicious websites. However, you will be inconvenienced if you require email, use online banking and shopping, and search the web for the information you need. Unless you absolutely require Windows XP for a program that is not supported with a newer version of Windows, or an alternate operating system such as Linux or Mac OS X, the best move is to upgrade or migrate.

For recommendations on how to harden the security of your Windows XP computer, be sure to read Neil Rubenking's [article](#) for PC Magazine.

Upgrade or Migrate

Depending on the age of your computer, you may be able to upgrade to a newer version of Windows. Although Windows 8 is now Microsoft's flagship product, some online retailers may still sell Windows 7, if you do not like the Metro interface of Windows 8. Before you commit to buying a newer version of Windows, you should check for compatibility information. Use your favorite search engine to search for "Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor" or "Windows 8 Upgrade Advisor", you will find software tools on Microsoft's website that will help you to assess if your computer's hardware and software will support the newer version of Windows. If not, then you may need to upgrade the hardware and software in your existing computer, or purchase a new computer with Windows pre-installed.

You may also consider an alternate operating system such as Linux. Linux has lower system requirements than Windows 7 and 8, so it may happily run on your aging computer for years to come. Two versions ("flavors") of Linux that are popular with CUGG's members are Ubuntu and Linux Mint. These versions have the added value of being free to download and install. Although Linux will not natively run Microsoft software, many equivalent free alternative programs exist for Linux. For the expert user, WINE may be a solution to continue using a favorite Windows program under Linux.

Mac OS X is another good alternative. The one down side is that purchasing a new computer with Mac OS X is generally more expensive than an equivalent new Windows computer. Still, it is a mature operating system with a large number of free and commercial programs that are the same as or equivalent to what is available for Windows.

Emulation

If using Windows XP is absolutely critical, a possible solution is to use an emulator that allows you to continue using the operating system along with a more modern operating system. Windows 7 supports Windows XP Mode, which is an emulator that can run Windows XP as another application within the

Windows 7 environment. Other emulators for Windows are VirtualBox and VMWare. Emulators such as VMWare, Win4Lin, and QEMU are available for Linux. Likewise, Parallels Desktop, VMWare Fusion, CrossOver, and VirtualBox are available for Mac OS X.

Conclusion

Whichever steps you take, please be sure always to keep your operating system and applications up-to-date, use anti-virus software to protect against malware, jealously protect your passwords and sensitive data (personal and financial), and make regular backups of your critical data. An ounce of prevention now will avoid a pound of frustration and anxiety later on.