

No. 214: Stay Away from Adobe

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I have nothing against Adobe products – Acrobat Reader, Flash Player and others. Well, maybe I do in the sense that using them puts you at unreasonably high risk, and the company seems not to correct the errors that make their customers vulnerable to attacks of malware. Here are some facts.

According to a posting by Tim Weaver on the Majorgeeks website (majorgeeks.com), “99% of computers are vulnerable to exploit kits. Oracle Java, Adobe Reader and Adobe Flash Player is present on 99% of computers. That means that 99% of computer users are vulnerable to exploit kits (software vulnerabilities).”

You would think that Adobe would correct the software holes that make their products repeatedly so vulnerable to attack. However, they seem not to do so. I subscribe to a weekly posting by the National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center (NCCIC) that pinpoints holes in software from all companies as they are discovered. High vulnerabilities during two weeks in October 2015 for Adobe were 10 out of 51 and 56 out of 95. That is, of all the high vulnerabilities recorded by the NCCIC during those two weeks, Adobe accounted for about 20% and 59%, respectively. Way too high! Moreover, having read these weekly postings for well over 5 years, I can reflect that Adobe has shown high vulnerability for a majority of weeks.

So what is Stan really saying? Stay away from dangerous products, or run the risk of becoming hacked and/or infected with malware. Adobe Acrobat is used to read .pdf files, but there are many others out there that do just as good a job without the danger. A free, simple and efficient reader for this job is Sumatra PDF (downloadable from majorgeeks.com). If you insist on using Adobe Flash Player on your machine, be sure you take responsibility for making sure it is up-to-date with the latest version release. Java (not an Adobe product) is easy – just uninstall it and you are safe. It really is not needed in most cases, though Oracle will tell you otherwise. If you find you really do need it on occasion, install and use it, then quickly uninstall it.

Want to see what products are dangerous? Go to www.us-cert.gov and sign up for alerts, tips and other updates (at the bottom of the page). Keep informed and avoid danger!

Next month, I will cover a bit about Windows 10 spying and the simple way to thwart it. Happy computing!