

THE COMPUTER CORNER

No. 231: The Death of XP

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The time has come, folks. XP POS (Point of Sale) will still work and update, but it is no longer safe to use. Particularly with the advent of ransomware (a hot new type of malware that locks your machine until you pay a ransom – a topic for a different Computer Corner article), I really can no longer consider XP safe to use. There is too much at risk, particularly if you have it networked with other XP or non-XP machines.

If your XP is, indeed, networked with others, you can consider it the weakest link in the chain, making all the other computers in the network vulnerable to attack. In other words, if the weak-link XP machine becomes infected, the infection can more easily spread to the others in the network. Time for the law of diminishing returns to kick in. It is simply no longer worth using XP.

The only exception was clearly outlined by John Strachota (W9FAD) this morning at our Southern ORC Breakfast (there is a Northern ORC Breakfast, too). John wants to continue to use an older CAD/CAM program that will not run on anything higher than XP or even Linux. But, he is willing to pay the price. He has taken the networking card out of his XP machine, which means he cannot access the Internet or any of his other computers with it. Anything he wants to transfer can be easily done with a floppy, CD or thumbdrive (we called this “sneakernet” back in the day when it was more common). Used in isolation this way, the XP machine cannot be directly infected, nor can it directly infect others. The only possible danger is when transferring his work to or from the XP machine by floppy, CD or thumbdrive. One can scan any of those media to make sure they are clean before the transfer. But, he must scan using an Internet-connected machine since virus definitions cannot be updated on the XP.

So, face the situation, fellow computer users, and switch your operating system, NOW. Seriously consider Linux. It looks a lot like Windows, can do all the same things (and more), and gets you away from Microsoft, which will all be *rentware* soon, anyway. (Remember you saw the term “**rentware**” first in this column ... I just coined it). Let me leave you with a clever item I copied for you in the box below. Happy computing!

Hyphenated.

Non-hyphenated.

The irony!