Radio Days – 2009-02-07

Tip of the Week – Power to Go

For the last week I have been without email access. This was caused by a problem at a sub-station which caused havoc at the data centre where my ISP had its email computers. This meant that many support people had to work very hard to restore all the emails from various sources. It has been a week now and emails are still arriving from the beginning of February. I have even received an email which I sent to myself on Monday 2 February: this took 5 days to get back to me! The problems continue.

The moral of this story is that, if you are running a business computer you need to have some protection from power hazards. You cannot stop a lightening strike but you can ensure that minor outages do not kill your business. For this you need a UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply). This has electronics to stop surges getting to your computer and a battery to keep the power supplied when it fails. This will carry you over a 10-second outage and give you time to shut your computer down for a longer outage.

Online Security: Startup Programs

There are many programs which need to start each time that Windows starts. There are major parts of Windows which start every time you switch your computer on, and your anti-virus and firewall programs also need to start at the same time.

You can add your own programs to this list. For example, I run a calendar program each time my computer starts. This keeps track of birthdays and other important dates so that I do not have to copy them into each year's diary and risk losing some. I also have a program which keeps track of how much I have downloaded each month so that I do not go over quota.

In a similar way all viruses need to start when you start your computer. If a virus can be stopped by refusing it permission to run at startup then it should be very easy to stop all viruses before they can get a foothold! This is the theory, and it will work for many viruses. All it takes is a little thought to ensure that all programs which should run at startup are allowed to run, and all those which should not run at startup should be stopped.

Very easy in theory, but as usual the devil is in the details.

On of the reasons that so many people hate Windows Vista is because of the User Account Control (UAC) which pops-up at the worst times to ask if you are sure that you want to do what you want to do. Because it is so pervasive many people click it just to make it go away, or even turn it off. This is a potential problem with any program which asks if you are sure that you want to do what you appear to be doing. When a program asks for permission to start automatically with Windows it is all too easy just to click *Yes* to make it go away.

A better solution is to use a program which only asks if you want to allow another program to run at startup. Often a firewall will do this for you, but there is another excellent program from Mike Lin which does the job for you. This is a small program called *StartupMonitor* which watches for other programs wanting to run at startup. Like all of Mike's programs this is *Donationware* and works as advertised. There are other programs which do the same job, but this is the best one that I know. Please help Mike by making a donation.

This means that you can turn Vista's UAC off and just use *StartupMonitor* to stop many, but not all (if only life were so easy!), programs from running when you start your computer.

Websites

StartupMonitor   www.mlin.net