

Radio Days – 2014-04-05

Discussion - Windows XP

Many people know that Microsoft will end support for Windows XP on Tuesday 8 April 2014. That is in just three days!

If you are one of the many people who are still using Windows XP you may be wondering just what are your options? There are, of course, many options ranging from the *elephant-in-the-room* do nothing to a full-blown panic at the thought of your computer not working on Wednesday 9 April 2014.

If you are one of those who have not realised that Microsoft will stop supporting Windows XP on Tuesday 8 April 2014 then you may be in for a rude shock.

Let's see if we can bring some sort of clarity to the debate. I have spent much of the last twenty years debunking various myths. The latest one, which has nothing to do with computers, was told to me recently. I was checking my tyre pressures after refuelling and was told that you should never pump tyres up to a pressure greater than 32 PSI. If you did so you risked your tyres bursting in hot weather.

I have been running my tyres at 40 PSI for many years now and had both better fuel economy and better tyre life than the vast majority of people.

So, let's have a look at the truth surrounding Windows XP and what you might want to do in the light of Microsoft's announcement.

Will my computer stop working?

No.

This, of course, is a qualified answer because computers stop working for all sorts of reasons but the lack of Microsoft's support does not mean that your computer will stop running. It just means that there will be no more updates to Windows XP.

If you have not updated your copy of Windows then nothing will change. If you have installed every update which came along then you will notice that there are no more of these updates to install.

This means that your computer will become much more vulnerable to attack from hackers as time goes by. Your best option is to update to a new computer with a new version of Windows as soon as possible. Already Windows XP is attacked much more frequently than Windows 7 because it is such an easy target.

Will Windows 8 run on my computer?

No.

Windows 8 is a much later operating system designed for the latest hardware. This new hardware has processors which are about 250 times more powerful than your old Windows XP computer, memory which is about 250 times faster than your old memory and display adapters which are also much more powerful than your old display adapter.

In addition, your current screen will now look old and tired beside one of the screens which are sold with new computers.

All in all, now is a good time to buy a new computer.

Will Microsoft still support MSE?

No.

MSE (Microsoft Security Essentials) is Microsoft's free anti-virus program. Because support for Windows XP will end on 8 April 2014 there will be no more updates to MSE after that date. This means that you will need to change your anti-virus program as soon as possible: I currently recommend Avast as my preferred free anti-virus program.

If your computer is connected to the internet (as most computers are) you need anti-virus protection. There are still those who believe that they do not need to install an anti-virus program because there is nothing worth having on their computer.

This is like sticking your head in the sand and stating that there is no train coming to kill you. It may comfort you in the short term but is almost guaranteed to make your life miserable in the longer term.

Please download and install the free Avast anti-virus program from the address at the end of this article if you currently use MSE or you do not have an anti-virus program.

Do I need to update Office

Perhaps.

Microsoft will end support for both Office XP and Office 2003 (as well as Windows XP) on Tuesday 8 April 2013. This is not such a big deal but it does mean, for those who have a passionate hatred of all ribbon interfaces, that your next version of Word (or any other Office program) will encourage you to learn to love the new ribbon interface.

Once you have become used to this new interface you, like me, will find that it is easier to use than the old menu-driven interface because all the options are now in the open rather than hidden by being buried in a maze of deep menu options.

Do I need to update my other programs?

Yes.

For maximum protection you should keep all your programs updated. Some programs update themselves automatically but the majority still need to be updated manually. The best way to find which programs need to be updated is to run *Secunia PSI* (Personal Software Inspector) to find the out-of-date programs on your computer and let you know that they need to be updated.

This is the best and easiest way to keep your programs up-to-date.

What about my web browser?

If, after all the warnings, you are still using Internet Explorer to browse the internet on Windows XP (or any other version of Windows) you need to protect yourself by downloading and installing one of the better web browsers. There are three good free web browsers which do a better job than the current version of Internet Explorer, and that means that they are out of sight when compared to the latest version of Internet Explorer available for Windows XP.

Internet Explorer invites hackers to attack your computer, and these other browsers are much more difficult to attack so will give you yet another layer of protection. These browsers are:

- Chrome
- Firefox
- Opera

Are there programs which only run on Windows XP?

Yes, there are still some programs which only run on Windows XP. They are few and far between so, if they are essential to the running of your business, you may be caught between the devil and the deep blue sea.

If you have one of these programs you would be well advised to get a later version (if one exists) or to upgrade to a similar program which satisfies your needs (again, if one exists). You may need to find another alternative because, sooner or later, your computer will succumb to old age and give up the ghost. At this time you will have to act without the luxury of time to consider your options.

Act now, while you have time, before the need to act is thrust upon you.

What about Window 9?

Windows 9 is expected to come out at some time between October 2014 and April 2015. This new version is expected to be Windows 8 done properly. It will still have touch-screen capability and the tiles which are so useful for those who like Windows phones but it will be so much more mouse-and-keyboard friendly.

If you can hold out until then you may find that buying a new computer will be less painful than buying one using Windows 8.

It's your call.

What about my data?

Your data is, for most computer users, the most important part of your computer. If it goes down the gurgler when your computer dies or succumbs to a hacker attack then you will be left, high and dry, without any data.

Please ensure that you have a backup plan and that you backup your data frequently (and that means every time that you make an update to your data!).

My preferred backup program is SyncBack. There are two versions: free and SE: both are available from the website at the end of this article.

When all else fails ...

Microsoft is still providing some support for people like you. It is in their interest to persuade you to update to a new computer with a new version of Windows (ie Windows 8.1) but this is not your only option.

To see if Microsoft can help you, their Australian support telephone number is 132-058.

Further Information

Avast	www.avast.com
Secunia PSI	www.secunia.com
Chrome	www.google.com/chrome
Firefox	www.mozilla.org
Opera	www.opera.com
SyncBack	www.2brightsparks.com