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ThunderBOOM Season Has Arrived!

by Jerry Stern

It's power surge season. Take a few minutes to audit your technology and power protection. Lightning strikes cause more damage among my clients than burglars, floods, and fires combined.

Check your tech:

  Servers should be plugged into uninterruptible power supplies, also known as battery backups. Test them every six months by unplugging them; everything plugged in on the 'battery' side of the UPS should continue working, and the alarm should sound. Don't test while Windows is running--start the computer, immediately press F12 to choose the boot device (works on most systems), and while the computer is sitting on the list of devices, run your test.
  Computers and printers should be plugged into surge suppressors. They should be marked, usually on the bottom, as surge suppressors or transient voltage suppressors. If it's an outlet strip marked on the bottom as a temporary power tap, it has no surge suppression.
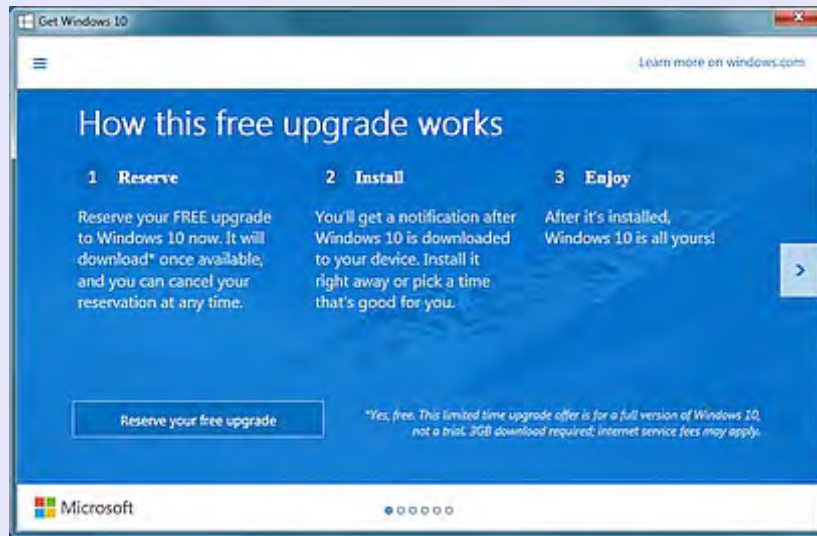 There are surge suppressors for network cables, too. (We have these in-stock.) There should be a suppressor between the cable modem and whatever comes next in your network--that's usually the wireless router or switch. I see more surge damage to computers that entered through the network port than any other kind of damage.
  Finally, the big storms tend to hit us in early evening hours. When you know a dangerous storm is coming, even if you usually leave computers on at night, shut everything down, and turn off the power from the surge suppressor switch.

Reservations about Windows 10

A small white icon is starting to show up in the system tray (near the clock) of computers running Windows 7 and 8.1--it looks very much like the Windows 8.1 'start' button. Clicking on it brings up an advertisement from Microsoft to *reserve* a free copy of Windows 10 Should you accept that offer? Well, probably not yet.

Windows 10 is the next attempt by Microsoft to create one operating system that works everywhere, with touch, on phones, tablets, and desktops. It will detect keyboards and mice and display the standard desktop, detect tablets and display the touch interface, and offer to switch between them if your device is convertible. Sounds good, but it's early yet; it won't launch until July 29th, and there are always bugs for early installers.

First, the general rule on operating system upgrades: Never consider one unless ALL of the following items are true:

  You have a full, recent, tested image backup.
  You have identified every industry-specific program that you can't work without, and called tech support to be sure that they're ready to support it.
  You have a budget to replace hardware. Historically, I've seen that every major upgrade of Windows breaks one device per office; there's no driver upgrade available, or it just won't work. Sometimes it's two devices, usually one.

More specific to this Windows 10 offer:

  This upgrade will be delivered by Windows Update, soon after July 29th
  It's free. And it will continue to be free for one year after the release of Windows 10.
  The download will be larger than 1 Gigabyte. Even on cable internet or FIOS, that's a large download. The upgrade from Windows 8 to 8.1 was delivered that way, and failed to install on many machines, and required re-downloading after driver updates, which didn't always fix the issue.

Overall, wait to install Windows 10 on business machines. If you want to risk it on a machine that doesn't run any important specialty software, create a full image backup first, and go ahead and accept the reservation offer. But for everyone else, the usual reservations about big updates apply: Early adopters are the testers for everyone else. The free offer is good for a year; don't rush into it.

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