

Science Translations

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Managed Services,
PC Consulting, Sales, & Service in Central
Maryland

Cheating on Taxes, and a News Roundup



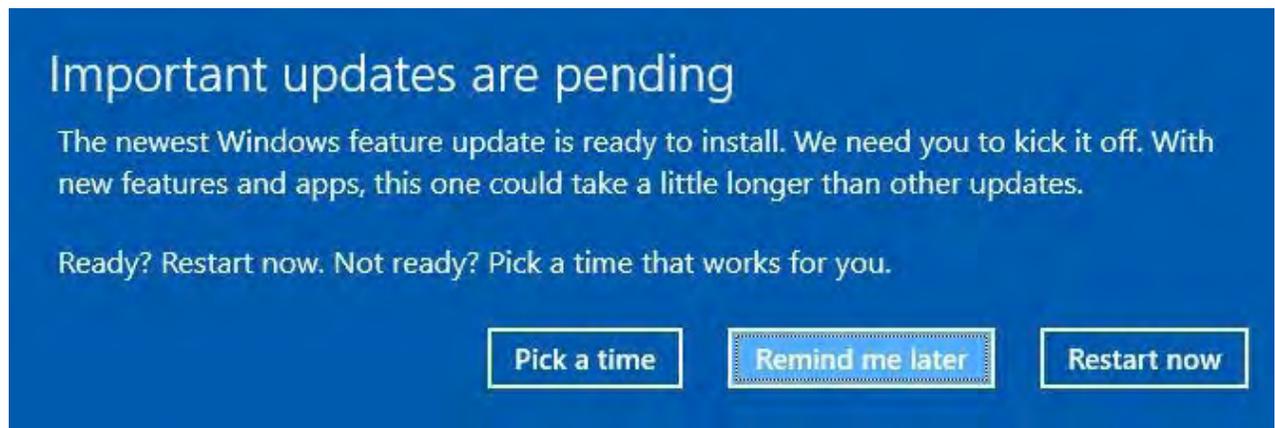
Yes, it's that time of year, time for tax cheats. The IRS has its annual warning of the latest scams, mostly phishing emails, online as a 'Dirty Dozen' list. Some of these items are tax-specific, but not all. The usual suspects appear again: phish, phone scams, fake charities, and more.

<https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-wraps-up-dirty-dozen-list-of-tax-scams-for-2018-encourages-taxpayers-to-remain-vigilant>

Windows 10 1809 is Arriving, Slowly

The semi-annual feature update from last October, or 1809, has arrived on nearly a third of the systems I see regularly. There's a 40 minute install, so it's best to reboot your computer once a week so that you can choose a time to allow the install, rather than waiting for the popup message that "Important updates are pending" and then having to go on an extended coffee break. (Good or bad is a matter of perspective here.) The image shown here is not consistent, some read "The newest Windows feature update is here"; both are real messages from Windows, and safe to click on. In the case of a bad update, Windows will generally fix

itself and restore the old version automatically. If not, the old files are saved, and I can restore the previous versions.



As always, check your Windows 10 version by clicking the Start logo, typing 'winver', and pressing Enter. The Version shows in the second line of information.



Windows 10 1903 will Reduce Menu Clutter

The next semi-annual update, known as either '19H1' or 1903', will have some visual changes, but they're minor. The big tile menu has fewer entries by default, and users of Office 2016 will see icons for most Office apps show in the tile area automatically.

There's also a 'light' theme for the start menu and task bar, and a 'dark' mode for File Explorer. The light theme is a small change to how the start menu looks, basically a pale gray background where there was black. The dark mode will be useful mostly for tablet use in low-light. Some Windows icons, and nearly all the Office icons, will have new looks, usually so that they will work on both light and dark backgrounds. Also in File Explorer, the 'Downloads' view now shows a group sort by date, showing 'Today' as a group of downloads at the top by default.

Cortana (voice search) has a separate icon in Windows 10 1903, and is no longer grafted onto the Start menu. It can now be configured separately from the Start menu.

For users on high-resolution screens, televisions, or multiple monitors, there are

improvements in adjusting the mouse pointer size, font sizes, and font thickness.

There's a new feature in the Pro versions: Windows Sandbox can isolate a program or websites in a temporary virtual machine. Some users may like it for visiting banking sites, or running programs that would interfere with other installed software. Sandbox will require turning on, one time, in the 'Windows Features' listing, and then it will be available from the Start Menu. Sandbox is isolated from your other software and files, so it provides protection against potential online threats, but also does not allow transferring files directly to or from your usual folders.

There's a good writeup, and a video tour, at WindowsCentral.com:

<https://www.windowscentral.com/windows-10-19h1-changelog>

Acquisitions Continue

Tech companies are combining. Carbonite (backup services) is in the process of buying Webroot Endpoint Protection. This will close in the last quarter of 2019, and will likely result in some bundle offerings, or easy backup options. It's too soon to know any details of what will become available.

ConnectWise, which includes Control, previously known as ScreenConnect, has been acquired by a private equity firm known as Thoma Brava. They already own a long list of other companies, which basically run individually, and include Barracuda, Kofax, and McAfee, which was most recently a part of Intel.

Disconnected Backups

A reminder: Crypto-ransomware is not gone; it's still causing trouble, and increasingly tries to encrypt entire networks and erase backups. Floods, fires, burglars, lightning strikes, and sprinkler head malfunctions still happen, and all tend to remove from use, one way or another, computers and everything near them. If your only backup is connected to your computer at all times, it will protect you against hard drive failure and accidentally erasing a file, but nothing else. The recent set of tornados in Alabama took out entire buildings, and some businesses without off-site backups will never re-open.

I have asked so many people: Your notebook drive is clicking; tell me about your backups. What follows can best be described as a blank stare. Relying on an employee to run a backup on a schedule, to a device that will be locked in a fire safe or taken home, has a failure rate of over 95%. Doesn't happen. So automation, isolation, and verification (testing and email notices of failed backup) are all requirements of having a backup when it's needed.

Local backups to a NAS, or network-attached drive, can go to the far end of a building, maybe in a locked cabinet. Cloud backups can go to the other end of the country. Both of these backups can save multiple versions of files, to protect against ransomware and employee issues, both deliberate and accidental.

Your backups also need to be disconnected, taken offline, or physically separated from your real-time computing. If there's just one backup, and it's next to your server, your data is not protected. Call me for a backup review; there are more options to automate, isolate, and properly monitor backups now, and many of them are scalable for small business use.
