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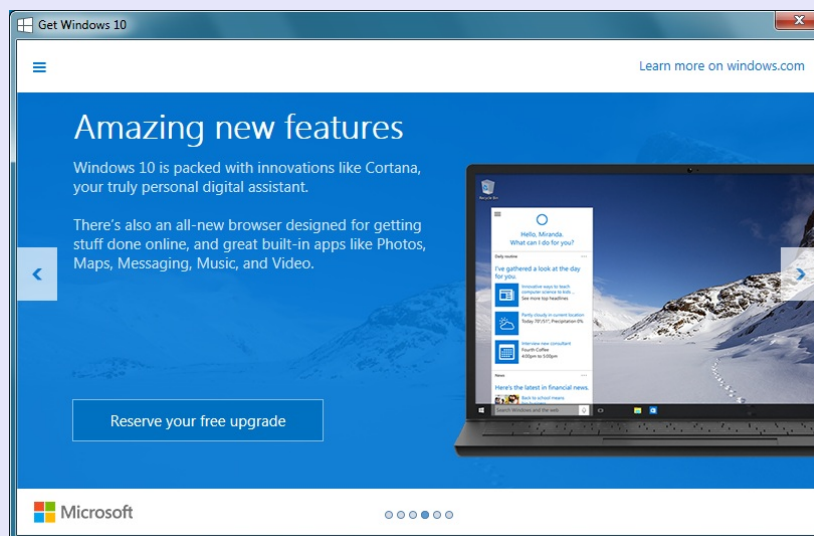
Security & PC News, July 2015

Windows 10 Gets Closer

by Jerry Stern

Microsoft is promoting their free Windows 10 update heavily now, and that will increase as we get closer to the July 29th launch date. The white Windows logo is appearing on computers now, riding in the system tray, and offering a free upgrade to Windows 10 “when available... just click on ‘reserve now’ to get yours.”

The history of such upgrades is that they don't let you chose when to install them. The only good time to install them, if you want them at all, is when you have no work deadlines pending, when you won't need the computer for 2 hours, when there's no thunderstorm on the way, when the computer is NOT running on battery power, and when you have a full and recent image backup of the system.



My recommendation is still to wait. Windows 10 will be a free update for one year after the launch, up to late July of 2016. The initial launch is likely to be a rough ride; wait to update until you're seen the new version, have decided that you like it,

and have a full image backup of your system. If in doubt after July 29th, call us at 410-871-2877, and we can tell you what the install history has been so far. Before then, we have Windows 10's 'Insider Preview' running on a notebook back at the shop, and can bring it along on any trip to your offices.

Have a slow notebook?

We're having a 'notebook speed training' sale.

Best speedup for a slow notebook, or a notebook with mediocre battery run-time, is a switch from a hard drive with moving parts based on phonographs and wire recorders to a solid-state drive with no moving parts. Typical improvement? There's the boot time of around 30 seconds, from pressing 'on' to a usable system. Notebooks run cooler, too, and batteries run longer.

Until July 15th, here's the deal: \$209, to upgrade any Windows 7 (or above) system to a 240 Gb solid-state drive, including a drive housing for your old drive to use as a backup gadget. That's a flat rate, drop-off locations in Westminster and Towson.

Domain Letters: Real Ones, Fake Ones.

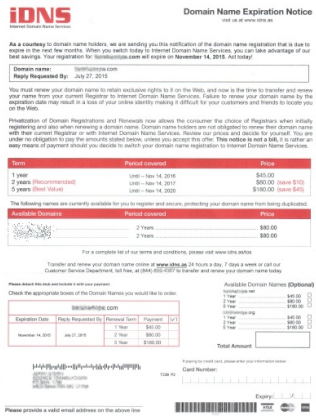
Do you own a domain? If you do, and if you are listed in the contact information for it, you're going to get mail. There are emails and snail-mail letters from the registrar, and there are fake letters from everyone else. Here's what to expect, and what to do about them:

Real: Annual Scary Warning

This notification is being sent to you as a contractual requirement of the ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) WHOIS policy. When you registered your domain with us, you agreed to keep your contact information in Account Manager current, and the WHOIS policy mandates that we ask you to verify and/or update this information periodically. Further, ICANN requires us to remind you that providing inaccurate or dated contact information may be grounds for domain name cancellation.

Translation to English: Once a year, the company that runs the domain-name system (ICANN) requires companies that sell domains (registrars) to contact their customers, reminding them to update the contact information for their domains.

What to do: If in doubt, forward it to your webmaster. If none of your contact information has changed, it can generally be ignored, but some registrars ask you to log into the domain account and click on a button to prove that you've looked at the contact information and either updated it or confirmed that you're still reachable at those addresses.



Fake: Renewal notices by Mail

This is a variation on the fake-but-authentic-looking invoice for Yellow Pages listings, light bulbs, just about anything. An invoice arrives by mail reminding you to renew your domain, usually around 3 months before it's due to expire. The company name will be generic; they're attempting to look familiar. The information on the invoice will be correct, because they've collected it from your existing and public domain registration; anyone can look that up at any

'Whols' site.

If you pay that invoice, you've authorized the transfer of the domain to a new registrar, usually at slightly more money than a normal renewal would have cost. Transfers to a bad registrar can make your web hosting unreliable, or if your domain registrar is also your web host (not recommended), it can break the site. Just shred the invoice.

Variations and Combinations

Some of these fake invoices aren't for domain renewals:

I've seen them for Google Search optimization, which is of the variety of "We'll spam a thousand other web sites with your link and make your web site pop up in malware." That's also known as 'black hat optimization' and it results in web sites being removed from search results altogether. Shred it.

There are invoices (and robocalls, too) for updating your listing in Google Places; that's the free listing in Google Maps for listing your business, and you don't need a unknown service company to create it or edit it.

There's a backup service for \$70/year. The catch is that any backup of a web site done without having login information to the web server is going to be incomplete and not usable for restoring the site. Here's what the Better Business Bureau reports for this company:

Recently, BBB has received a high volume of complaints and currently have numerous pending complaints filed against WebsiteBackup. BBB has a marked pattern of complaints alleging billing issues and advertising issues. Complainants claim to have received a bill in the mail for \$70 for services that were never ordered or rendered. Complaints further allege that when they contact the company about the billing error, the company claims they are not really clear on the invoice either and then asks the caller if they have a current website provider.

These companies pop up, send lots of invoices, collect what they can, and disappear, change to new names and new invoice formats, and start over. Shred

the invoices. Inform your accounts payable staff. Be wary.

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