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Intelligence Notification 010-2014

CYBER BITS

Microsoft Windows XP: End of Support

What happened?

Microsoft's Windows XP operating system (OS) was launched in 2001. The last stable release was launched on 21 April 2008 (5.1 - Build 2600: Service Pack 3). Windows XP has proven to be one of the most popular OSs in computer history, having the highest level of penetration in the market during January 2007, with a share of 76.1%¹. Now, however, the support for the last Service Pack (SP3) will end on 8 April 2014.

This doesn't mean that computers running Windows XP will stop working. It means that there will be no more security updates, hotfixes, online technical content updates or any kind of technical support for the Windows XP SP3 operating system after this date. This concurs with the end of support for Office 2003. From a user's perspective, and practically-speaking, this means that newly discovered vulnerabilities in Windows XP and Office 2003 will remain unpatched.

How does it work?

In February 2014, Windows XP still had a global market share of 29.53%², making it the second most-used OS. Many users and companies still rely on this version of OS.

Running Windows XP SP3 after 8 April 2014 may expose PCs to high security risks as they might become vulnerable to different forms of malware which can steal or damage personal or business data/information. Attackers will have the perfect opportunity to exploit new security vulnerabilities to get access to these systems.

Without critical security updates Windows XP systems should be considered insecure and anti-virus software will not be able to fully protect systems once Windows XP itself is unsupported.

Businesses will experience issues with satisfying compliance requirements and many software vendors and hardware manufacturers will no longer support their products running on/with Windows XP.

As an example, and according to the marketing director of NCR, the largest ATM supplier in the United States of America³, more than 95% of all **ATM machines** in the world are still running Windows XP. Many point-of-sale (PoS) machines also run different versions of Windows XP (some of them run Windows XP Embedded, for which the extended support date, will end on 12/01/2016) which makes them a perfect target for attackers.

¹ http://www.w3schools.com/browsers/browsers_os.asp

² <http://www.netmarketshare.com/operating-system-market-share.aspx>

³ <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-01-16/atms-face-deadline-to-upgrade-from-windows-xp>

What do we advise you to do?

- PCs running Windows XP after 8 April 8 2014, **will no longer be sufficiently protected** even if they are running anti-virus and firewall solutions. It is therefore advisable to migrate to a different operating system before 8 April, in order to avoid unnecessary security risks and serious data breaches
- Users looking to upgrade or change their Microsoft OS can obtain more information at <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/bb264763.aspx>. Users can also consider changing to a Macintosh or Linux-based OS
- Users who want to upgrade or change OS should consider getting advice from a specialist and if they don't have the technical expertise to do such job by themselves, they should hire a specialist who is able to do so. They should be aware that older computers running Windows XP may not be powerful enough to run the new selected OS and some old applications might not work on the new OS.

Before upgrading or changing the operating system, **all relevant data should be backed up**.

- A user that is not able to upgrade its Windows XP system at the moment should:
 - Install all Microsoft Windows XP and Office 2003 updates, up to and including final updates;
 - Install an alternative browser with regular security updates and support. There are numerous free versions;
 - Remove any unnecessary software;
 - Install an up-to-date antivirus and firewall solution;
 - When possible, disconnect the computer from the Internet. If a connection to the Internet is required, it is advisable to keep a computer at home or work on a trusted network, behind a hardware firewall. Avoid all free Wi-Fi hotspots;
 - As soon as possible, make the transition to a newer OS.
- To know more about Microsoft Windows XP end of support please check <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/end-support-help>