

AOL 9.0 Disables Built In Firewall in XP SP1

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To: NTBUGTRAQ@LISTSERV.NTBUGTRAQ.COM

I realize that this may be related to a home ISP product and may not exactly fall under business systems or IIS related products. However, chances are really great that you may have customers that are using AOL to connect to your networks from home.

Keep in mind this problem only happens with AOL on Windows XP Service Pack 1 Patched machines.

Basically, the installation of AOL 9.0 disables the ability for users To configure the Built In firewall for Windows XP. Since the Firewall is turned off in XP SP1, by default, users are not able to turn on their firewall. The average user will not know about this problem and will assume that either 1) AOL will handle the problem (which they haven't) or Microsoft has taken care of the problem (which they haven't).

To Duplicate the problem:

- 1) Set up one XP Pro Box configured with SP1 and one XP Pro Box with SP2. Have both of these configured with a Dial-up Modem.
- 2) Install AOL 9.0
- 3) Try to configure the Firewall on the XP pro Boxes from the 'Network Connections' window. Typically, you would right click the Network Connection used to get to the internet and select properties.

I have contacted Microsoft about this issue and their response was basically "It's not our problem". I have not been able to report this to AOL because they simply don't have any way to report this. Also, this issue has been reported to CERT.

There are currently no fixes or workarounds for Systems Patched with Windows XP Service Pack 1 and there is no information on either AOL or Microsoft's web site on how to respond to this issue.

With the Release of Windows XP service Pack 2 comes a newer firewall that is turned on by default. However, you still are not able to control the firewalls except for the workaround in the following KB article:

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<http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb:en-us:870890>

Finally, this issue is so basic I can't believe that this problem made it past the last round of Beta testers at AOL before RTM.

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