

Re: New LAN user needs laptop security assistance

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antispam.1.tyrcadia_at_neverbox.com

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In alt.computer.security J44XM <j44xm@seventy8.n_t> wrote:

> *Do I only really need anti-virus and firewall software? Can you recommend
> high-quality software, preferably (but not necessarily) try-before-you-buy*

On the anti-virus and firewall software side, for Microsoft OS's, you might want to take a look @ ZoneAlarm for a firewall, and AVG AntiVirus for AV software – both have free / shareware offerings for non-commercial use, I believe. I wouldn't dare connect to a public 'Net these days without a firewall and AV software. Backup your machine before trying new software! On that note, a small company called Acronis makes a nice product that makes image backups of your hard-drive – once you find the perfect configuration for your machine, you can take an image of it, and if you get infected with a virus or a software installation doesn't work properly, re-installation is as simple as restoring an image – instead of installing the OS, then packages, which can take days of effort. Partition your hard disk such that you have a blank formatted partition to store an image of the required size.

Security is as much a mind-set as it is getting the right software packages – take a good look at where you receive e-mail, whether or not those e-mails have attachments, and think before you do – do you know the sender before you open that mail? Do you know where all the software you install comes from and what it does? Downloading the latest "free" application may expose your machine to "AdWare" and other hidden pieces of software that leak out information about yourself and your Internet surfing habits to collection agents for marketing purposes.

Is it safe to leave yourself attached to a public LAN? Taking the best precautions, reasonably so. Think about why you need to remain attached, and if you're better served by connecting when you need. It's cool to have your IM's and e-mail waiting for you when you return to your laptop, but is it necessary?

Good luck!

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