

Re: Asking about anti-virus programs

Source: <http://www.derkeiler.com/Newsgroups/microsoft.public.security/2003-09/1246.html>

From: Philip Herlihy (foof8500_at_REMOVEherlihy.eu.com)

Date: 09/11/03

Date: Thu, 11 Sep 2003 09:44:54 +0100

Well I presume you're sleeping now because it's 9am here (making it 1am where you are.) Unless you're a party animal...

There's a bit of confusion here over the firewall. These three elements:

*) Firewall

*) Antivirus

*) Windows update

... are quite independent (except that *some* versions of McAfee and other antivirus products come bundled *with* a firewall).

You need to check explicitly that you have a firewall running – the Windows Update downloads can't turn it on for you. See the Microsoft article that I posted separately for details of how to do this. By the way, if you have more than one network connection, make sure you turn it on for any/every connection which goes out to the Internet. If you have an ethernet connection to another local machine, then you shouldn't enable the firewall on that connection unless you have reason to mistrust the other machine (if it has an unprotected Internet connection of its own, or is already infected, for example). Think of a firewall as a chain on your front door. If your back door opens out to the street, then you need a chain there too.

I ignore all that stuff from McAfee – I find them very annoying, although VirusScan works well enough. You do need a low-level way to keep informed about these issues, though, because the security situation will continue to change over time, and it's not long ago that firewalls were not considered important for home users. One useful source of information (apart from this very useful newsgroup) is the range of email "newsletters" you can get from Microsoft. I get several of the more technical ones, but there are also ones aimed at people with less technical preoccupations. See:

<http://www.microsoft.com/info/PICWhyRegister.htm>

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PH, London

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Deborah A. wrote:

> Dear Phillip,

>

> Thank you so much for taking the time and assisting me

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> with these security issues. Thanks too for mentioning that
> running a firewall is crucial.
>
> I believe I have enabled the one that came with McAfee,
> because I do go to windows update. I have my computer set
> to "automatically check for recommended updates," and when
> this last worm came out, I was notified, but I'm getting
> somewhat paranoid over what McAfee says each time I open
> and run my computer, after signing online with them
> yesterday: McAfee says my AntiVirusScan is running but I'm
> not protected from the other three crucial elements like
> stealing my personal info and credit card info. Then, that
> particular popup flashes real quick to where even the
> fastest readers have trouble reading it all! How ironic,
> as you have written, that McAfee is quite aggressive with
> their advertisements.
>
> Well, I also see you posted a second message today, the
> 10th, which I will now go and read. Thanks for telling me
> about the firewall...I believe mine is enabled only
> because "Microsoft Windows Update" flagged it. Windows
> Update asked me to make sure I check the box reading,
> something like "protect my computer" under a red-lined
> link saying something about: be sure to enable your
> interfirewall connection. Is that what you're talking
> about? If so, than my firewall is enabled. I'll double
> check as you have instructed.
>
> Again, thank you Phillip. I really appreciate your
> response and all the way from London! Does my message to
> you say I'm from California?
>
> Okay, I'll read your other message now. Oh, almost forgot,
> I did not buy the two software packages that McAfee
> offered which expired last night at midnight. I listened
> to myself and used the ole cliché: "if in doubt, do
> nothing" Besides, I was so burned out from sitting at my
> computer...I fell fast asleep (9:30 P.M. to 7:00 A.M. CA
> Time) and yes Phillip, I did sleep very well. Thanks
> (smile)
>
> Deborah
>
>
>> -----Original Message-----
>> I think you're doing enough to keep reasonably secure (but see no 2
>> below). The key elements of self-protection are:
>>
>> 1) Run a decent antivirus (McAfee is fine) but keep it updated,
>> weekly or so, with new DAT files. Check the "About" window
>> occasionally to make sure your updating process is working!
>>
>> 2) Run a firewall. (Crucial). You can either enable the one
>> built-in to XP (see Help) or download a free one (www.zonelabs.com
>> or www.kerio.com). Most home users don't need more than the free
>> versions available, but these days, everyone needs a firewall to
>> prevent connections being made to your machine from outside. You
>> haven't mentioned this, so you should look into it. You may have
>> the McAfee one already on your machine?
>>
>> 3) Keep windows updated via
> www.microsoft.com/windowsupdate. Check once a

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>> week. There are also security updates for Office at
>> http://office.microsoft.com/officeupdate - less critical (so far)
>> but worth doing.
>>
>> 4) Don't do anything daft, like open an attachment unless you're
>> sure (and noone can tell you how to be sure!) that it's safe. If in
>> doubt, chuck it out. They'll send it again if it's important!
>>
>> That lot should keep you safe from all the main risks. I put a
>> summary on my own website (overdue for a revamp) at
> www.WalthamSoft.com/gn/security/
>>
>> Apart from the major hazards of viruses and worms there is another
>> "nuisance" layer: spyware, popups, spams of various kinds. Those
>> McAfee popups are offering "protection" against things that are much
>> less of a problem, and most people don't need this sort of
> utility. McAfee are
>> infuriating in their aggressive selling methods so they may well be
>> from McAfee. Of the perils they describe, only ActiveX is really a
>> potential threat, and if you spend a bit of time studying the
>> security settings in Internet Explorer you'll see how to make IE ask
>> you for permission before downloading anything like that. Over
>> time, you'll become more confident in knowing what to accept or
>> reject. If in doubt, chuck it out... If you want an extra utility
>> to help you understand what's going on, and give you a bit more
>> control, you might try www.PopUpCop.com, which I rather like. You
>> don't need it, though.
>>
>> Anyway, good luck with the business, and sleep well!
>>
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>> --
>> #####
>> ## PH, London ##
>> #####
>>
>>
>> DEBORAH ADOPT wrote:
>>> Any experts out there that can answer security protection
>>> for my hp?
>>>
>>> Does anyone know about the difference between which anti-
>>> virus protection to have: McAfee or Norton? I'm getting
>>> confused and I need to know what I'm doing if I'm planning
>>> on opening an internet business.
>>>
>>> I purchased the Windows XP, hp pavilion 780n with the 950
>>> all-in-one printer, fax, scanner, and copier. Windows XP's
>>> Hard drive came with McAfee.com, which I've heard
>>> is "minimal security protection against worms and
>>> viruses," as everyone knows of this last big hit with
>>> the "Blaster Worm." However, since I bought the computer
>>> package in Jan 2001, I figured McAfee was fine and that I
>>> would just make sure that I kept my computer updated
>>> through "windows update," like installing all those
>>> security patches that came as no easy task, but rather, a
>>> big challenge for me. I really had a hard time getting the
>>> Fix-recovery patch and then just this last year there was
>>> the "Class Action Suite, Dec 12,2002; Plaintiff Brian
>>> Delre vs HEWLETT-PACKARD, involving the upgrading of HP
>>> DVD 100i series to the HP200i series.
>>>
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>>> Now, today I did purchase the online subscription for the
>>> McAfee VirusScan 1-year plan of \$24.95 because I followed
>>> the 4 steps to inquire about this worm affecting my
>>> computer. I did track my history of windows updating and I
>>> did install the Microsoft Security MS03-026 within less
>>> than the week the worm struck. However, after scanning
>>> (using the subscription for McAfee) for updates and
>>> scanning all files today, McAfee said "I was unprotected
>>> and at risk for JavaScript, ActiveX, Web Bugs, Cookies and
>>> JavaX," and McAfee offered me: "The Internet Security
>>> Advisor" consisting of both Secure IE and Private IE
>>> together as a package to protect my PC from security
>>> leaks, and hacking attacks.(I thought all those elements
>>> were covered under Windows Update)
>>>
>>> I decided to wait and closed the window, but a pop-up
>>> window appeared and "McAfee Security Special Partner"
>>> offered me another \$10.00 off coupon, because "they didn't
>>> want to loose as a customer." Then as I went for it,I read
>>> their "purchase agreement," which said the software
>>> is: "AS IS SALE," with all faults and no warranties, and
>>> just basically AcAfee is not at all responsible or liable
>>> for any damage the product might do to my system or other
>>> programs. The total cost for me to have "Secure IE &
>>> Private IE with a CD copy" would cost me about \$39.99
>>> approximately, and that I need to "hurry because this
>>> offer ends Sept 9, 2003, at 12Midnight." If I'm aware of
>>> this software package, I believe I saw something similar
>>> at Staples today, and if so, it was expensive...in the
>>> ranges of approx \$300 to \$600. Now can someone out there
>>> set me straight on securing one's computer?
>>>
>>> My questions to anyone who knows about this: Is "McAfee
>>> Special Partner Offer" legitimate and true? Or am I
>>> falling into a trap? Do I even need this, when I've been
>>> updating Windows automatically? I feel confused and I have
>>> some doubts. After I send this message, I'm going to talk
>>> to hp instant support, or contact Microsoft to inquire
>>> about this to see if I should buy and install this
>>> software. Most of my friends say they like Norton better,
>>> but they don't have the same computer I do. My Windows XP
>>> came with McAfee already installed.
>>>
>>> Thanks for your help. Help, help, please? What is true,
>>> and what is not? These computers can be risky and they are
>>> not cheap! I'm feeling less confident and rather
>>> cautious...am I being too insecure? I'd like to think I'm
>>> wise to double check before I impulsively act, buy it, and
>>> install it, especially if the software is not reliable
>>> with no warranties, as number 1 states: "AS IS SALE,"
>>> and "WITH ALL FAULTS."
>>>
>>> Again, I really appreciate those who really know their
>>> technology, and who are willing to educate me about what
>>> action I should take. In closing, I would hope for tighter
>>> security measures to be achieved, because life is already
>>> so difficult without having to add fuel to the fire.
>>>
>>> I apologize for the long message. This is my first time to
>>> ever write to a Newsgroup. If I've been out-of-line with
>>> any contents of this letter, please accept my apology. Not
>>> to try to gain any sympathy here, but I have missed lots

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>>> of sleep last night trying to figure this out, and missing  
>>> sleep is not good for my disability.  
>>>  
>>> Sincerely,  
>>> Deborah  
>>  
>>  
>> .
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