TechTidbit.com

brought to you by Tech Experts

Network Security: Keep Your Network Environment Secure

Ryan Seymour is a PC hardware specialist and the Tech Experts Service Manager.

As more and more people rely on the Internet to get things done in their daily life, network security is more important than ever.

Typically, small businesses and home network users haven't had to worry much about security.

Poor network security exposes you to viruses, spyware, and most dangerous, cyber criminals a.k.a. hackers.

These guidelines and best practices can help eliminate, or at least mitigate, the majority of network breaches and security vulnerabilities.

Security Policy

An active security policy is always the most important item for protection of your network, whether it is in your home or in a business environment.

This is simply a statement, or guideline of the rules and how security is setup in the organization.

This role will govern the level of security users are allowed access to on the network. The roles and responsibilities of each person on the network, as they are part of the system, should be clearly defined.

Passwords

Although the most obvious, it is definitely one of the most important, and often, most neglected items.

Be sure to enforce strong passwords across your network - a weak password could lead to a user account being compromised.

Email

Certain email attachments can become a major problem if the wrong one is opened, and a lot of the time it is by accident.

Some of the most common file types to block would be: .bas, .bat, .vbs, and .exe.

Patches/Updates

Be sure your operating system is up to date with most recent patches, security updates, and service packs.

This will close many of the vulnerabilities that can be exploited by hackers.

Inventory

Keep a good inventory of your network devices by developing and maintaining a list of all hardware and software components that are implemented on the network.

Try to understand which software applications should be installed, and which provide a weak security configuration so you can monitor those applications.

Adopt The Least Privilege Concept

The least privilege concept influences the network and/or systems administrator to create custom

Be sure your operating system is up to date with most recent patches, security updates, and service packs. This will close many of the vulnerabilities that can be exploited by hackers.

Join our page on Facebook. www.FBook.me/TechExperts

Need help? Call the Tech Experts 24 hour computer emergency hotline at (734) 240-0200.

How To Protect Your Computer From Lightning Damage

> *"Simply turning a computer off during a thunderstorm does nothing whatsoever to protect the computer."*

Thomas Fox is president of Tech Experts, southeast Michigan's leading small business computer support company.

During thunderstorms many people are leaving their computers unprotected. **Simply turning a computer off during a thunderstorm does nothing whatsoever to protect the computer.**

Nearby lightning strikes can cause surges through the power lines or phone lines into your house or office, and these often damage your computer.

Sometimes, just the power supply is damaged, and other times the damage is so extensive that the whole computer has to be replaced.

Power surges also do incremental damage to electronics, so the computer may work properly for a while, but occasionally lock up.

This type of fault is hard to diagnose or repair, so when storms approach, the best idea is to turn off the computer and unplug it from the outlet.

Don't forget to unplug your phone line or cable Internet from the computer too. These are the second most likely way for surges to get into your computer - the first being the electrical supply.

We often have a large number of service calls in the days following a severe thunderstorm - the most common complaint is: "My computer was fine when I shut it off, but now it won't power on."

Having a good, quality surge protector is great for the minimal day-to-day power surges that happen mostly unseen in the background. These surges and spikes gradually damage electronics.

But if lightning strikes, a surge protector will be instantly destroyed along with anything it was supposed to be protecting.

Also, keep in mind that cheaper surge protectors wear out over time, but there is no way of knowing their status.

Your best bet for safe computing during our spring thunderstorm season is to leave your computer unplugged when not in use - or at the very least, unplug it as storms approach.

Be sure to see this month's special newsletter insert, *"What Every Small Business Owner Needs To Know About Computer And Network Power Protection."*

Network Security, Continued From Front Page

policies for having permissions and access to network resources.

Try to allow only what access is absolutely necessary to users, not giving them more rights to the system than they should have.

Remote Access

Certain ports can be blocked to keep unwanted users from remotely accessing your network and any of its resources.

If you're one of the many small business owners who also works from home on occasion, there should be a security policy in place for VPN (virtual private network) access and your IT support company should assist with getting connected properly.

Keeping these simple guidelines in mind when thinking security on your network, and you'll prevent several possible problems from happening, as well as maintaining a safe and effective performing work environment for work and for pleasure, in home or in business.

Should you Leave your Computer on at Night?

Clients frequently ask if they should leave their computer on all the time or turn it off when they are not using it.

Several years ago we would have said to turn their PC off to save power, but with the proliferation of viruses and threats over the last few years, the answer has changed.

Today, anti-virus and anti-spyware applications need regular updating. These updates are often scheduled to run late at night when the computer isn't in use.

Windows needs to be updated often for security patches. This doesn't happen daily, but it may happen several times a month, and usually at night.

In addition to the above, you should be backing up your data every day. The best time to do this is at night when you are not using the computer.

Bottom line: Leave your PC (but not your screen) on at night so it is updated properly. But, restart the computer several times a week to clear the memory.

Key Features To Keep In Mind For A New LCD Monitor
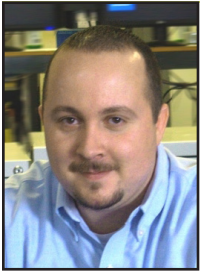
Will Alston is a PC hardware technician with Tech Experts.

If you're looking to upgrade your computer monitor, you want to make sure that you get the most bang for your buck, and buy the best monitor in your price range.

There are literally hundreds of monitors on the market, each with different features and specifications. You'll want to keep these in mind when going over your options.

Response Times

The response time refers to how fast the monitor's pixels can change colors.

Faster is obviously better because it reduces the ghosting effect when an image moves across the screen. The lower the response time is, the less you are going to see a faint trail in applications such as video games, streaming videos, or even Internet Explorer.

The response time is measured in milliseconds (MS). So the lower response time you get with your monitor the better performance you'll receive.

Viewing Angle

Have you ever looked at a computer monitor from an angle and noticed that the image became dimmer or even disappeared. To compensate for this problem, LCD manufactur-ers have designed wider viewing angles. Don't confuse this with a widescreen display, which means the display is physically wider.

Manufacturers give a measure of viewing angle in degrees (a greater number of degrees is better).

In general, when you're choosing a new monitor, make sure it's rated between 120 and 170 degrees.

Manufacturers measure viewing angles differently, so the only best way to really evaluate it is by testing the display yourself. Look at it from the top, bottom, side to side, and also keep in mind how you

will have the monitor positioned on your desk.

HDMI Inputs

HDMI is becoming the future of video input devices. The top of the line computer monitors provide at least one HDMI input on them.

The HDMI input is on there so you can use a high-definition source such as a Blue-Ray player or even a high-definition camcorder.

You might also want to consider HDMI outputs in case you need to run a monitor to another high-definition video source, such as a high-definition television or another HD monitor.

If you do decide to go with the HDMI, ensure that the ports are HDMI 1.3 compatible so that you are ready for any future upgrades to the HDMI standard.

Resolution and Contrast Ratio

Many manufacturers will try to sell you on resolution and contrast ratio as the two most important considerations when buying a new computer monitor.

While these features are important, they're less of a consideration among the best monitors.

Contrast ratio numbers are way too easily manipulated to be an indicator of a good monitor, so don't just rely on this number to tell you whether a monitor is good or not.

All of the best monitors have a ton of flexibility in resolution and support all of the most common resolution formats.

If you are running video editing software you might want to double check to see if you need something specific that meets your needs.

Remember if you need any assistance in choosing a new monitor, or comparing options, give us a call at (734)-457-5000. We'll be happy to help.

Cleaning Tips For Flat Screen Monitors

Unlike their CRT cousins, LCD monitors require a bit of special care when cleaning. Their displays are much more sensitive and are easily scratched and damaged.

Follow the easy steps below to safely clean your flat screen monitor in just a few minutes.

1. Turn off the monitor. A dark screen will show dirty or oily areas better.

2. Use a dry, soft cloth and very gently wipe the screen. A great choice would be the microfiber type of cloth used to clean eyeglasses.

3. If the dry cloth didn't completely remove the dirt or oil, don't press harder to scrub it off. Pushing directly on the screen can cause pixels to burn out.

4. If necessary, dampen the cloth with distilled water or with an equal ratio of distilled water to white vinegar.

Tips

1. Avoid using paper towels, toilet paper, tissue paper, or something like your shirt to wipe the LCD screen. These non-ultrasoft materials can easily scratch the screen.

2. Avoid cleaning products that contain ammonia, ethyl alcohol, acetone, or ethyl acid. These chemicals can react with the materials that the screen is made of which could damage it or make it go yellow.

3. Never spray liquid directly on the LCD screen or it could run inside the monitor and cause damage.

3 Easy Ways to Green-up Your Small Business
Dispose Of Old Electronics The Right Way

Corey Bogedain is a network technician and web developer with Tech Experts.

E-waste contains all kinds of nasty stuff, including lead, mercury and cadmium. Sadly, much of this waste gets shipped to landfills and smelters in developing countries, exposing tens of thousands of people to harm.

Your first question when seeking to get rid of office equipment should be this: Can someone still use this stuff? If yes, post it on Craigslist or eBay. It'll be gone in a New York minute.

If it's beyond repair, you've got a few options.

The best is to find a recycler that's involved in the Basel Action Network's e-Stewards program, a group of companies that have vowed not to export hazardous waste to poor countries.

Another option is to give it back to the manufacturer. The problem with this approach is you can't be sure they'll use a morally sound recycler.

To sum up, here are your options:

Best: If the device is still operational, sell or donate it.

Second best: Find an electronics recycler near you that is an e-Steward member.

Third best: Use the manufacturer's take back program.

Resources

Craigslist.org: Sell or donate your unwanted (but functional) electronics. http://craigslist.org

E-stewards.org: Lists recyclers that have pledged not to dispose of hazardous e-waste in developing countries. http://www.e-stewards.org/local_estewards.html

Epa.gov: Find local recyclers. View a list of manufacturer take back programs. http://www.epa.gov/waste/inforesources/news/2009news/08-r2.htm

Buy a water cooler

These aren't just for idle chitchat! By quenching your thirst at the water cooler you avoid having to buy plastic water bottles—the scourge of Earth.

According to this story in Outside Magazine, there is a flotilla of plastic crap the size Texas in the Pacific Ocean - wait, scratch that: the "Eastern Garbage Patch" is actually twice the size of Texas.

http://outside.away.com/outside/culture/200912/david-de-rothschild-plastiki-1.html

Don't go to work

Skype, Google Wave, GoToMeeting. The technology required for telecommuting is cheap and readily available.

And there's no better way to lower your carbon footprint than to reduce your highway time. If your boss wants you in the office, consider carpooling a day or two per week with a coworker.

Or just build a crack case for telecommuting: a quick Google search will give you all the material you need.

Assemble a PowerPoint presentation and channel your inner Al Gore. Just promise us that when you start telecommuting you won't be that guy in his pajamas jabbering into his cell phone at Starbucks.

Create new service requests, check ticket status and review invoices in our client portal: https://connect.expertsmi.com/support