

Experts Update

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by:



980 South Telegraph Road
Monroe, Michigan 48161
(734) 457-5000
info@expertsmi.com

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Michigan's Leading Eye Center Clearly Sees The Benefits Of Trusting Tech Experts For IT Support

"What we like most about working with Tech Experts is the reasonable pricing and prompt service."
-Kellie Pettinga
Castleman's
Office Administrator

Castleman Eye Center has been in practice in the Downriver Area for over 35 years, providing routine eye exams, LASIK eye surgery, CK, cataract surgery, glaucoma treatment and diabetic eye exams for patients from all over the area.

The practice relies heavily on its IT infrastructure for internal communications, patient scheduling, medical billing, accounting and staff scheduling.

Kellie Pettinga is Castleman's Practice Administrator. With three locations to manage, her days are full. A smooth-running computer network is essential to keeping on top of the busy medical practice.

"What we like most about working with Tech Experts is the reasonable pricing and prompt service," explained Kellie. "In some cases, Tech Experts can fix problems on our systems remotely, resulting in an immediate fix. This is most helpful as we are a very busy medical office."

After nearly 34 years in the same location, Castleman Eye Center moved to a new headquarters location last year. Tech Experts supported the entire IT systems move.

"We recently moved to a new location after being in our last office for 34 years," said Kellie. "Tech Experts made the move quickly and efficiently. We had no worries about our computer systems at a very hectic, chaotic time!"

Tech Experts provides a comprehensive set of services for Castleman, including technical support, web and email services, Microsoft licensing management, and new equipment procurement.

Of all the services, Kellie says e-mail may be the most important.

"The biggest benefit working with Tech Experts brings us is having our own network and website," said Kellie. "It's great to have interoffice email and outer office email, since



Dr. Michelle Akler, named one of Laser Vision's Top 5 Surgeons in the United States, examines a patient at Castleman's Taylor office.

we have four locations to communicate with. That's a huge advantage and time saver for our doctors and staff."

The practice has worked with other IT support companies in the past, and has found Tech Experts provides the best support value.

"We have used Tech Experts for several years and have always found the technicians to be very knowledgeable and very quick to respond," commented Kellie. "The support team can be contacted via phone and if not available, will call back within 15 to 30 minutes, at the most."

Castleman's network consists of a Microsoft Windows 2003 Server located at the Taylor headquarters location with workstations located at additional locations in Troy, Southgate, and another facility in Taylor. Tech Experts provides both on-site and remote support for all the locations.

Kellie concluded: "I believe a well-supported in-office network has contributed to the success and how efficiently our business runs. And the tokens of appreciation Tech Experts sends us around holidays are a nice touch!"

To learn more about Castleman Eye Center and their services, call 800-403-0060, or visit their website: www.castlemaneyecenter.com.

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980 South Telegraph Road
Monroe, Michigan 48161
(734) 457-5000 • Fax (734) 457-4332
info@expertsmi.com

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



Protect Your Computers From Spring Thunderstorms

What's the best way to keep your computer safe during a thunderstorm? Crawl under your desk and unplug it.

While not a particularly practical suggestion, unplugging your PC from AC power, a telephone line if you use a modem, and your network will protect it from surges and power problems.

A more practical solution would be to use a power protection device, such as a true surge protector, or a business-grade battery backup system.

Computer damage from severe weather conditions is surprisingly a very common problem, despite warnings to install power protection.

When power problems strike, they can cause permanent damage, to either your computer or your data.

To minimize the possibility of damage, install a true



surge protector - not just a power strip. A true power strip will cost you in the neighborhood of \$20 to \$40, and most offer specific guarantees if your equipment is damaged after you properly install the power protection device.

Get a surge protector that also protects

your network, phone lines or DSL connection. Some even offer a connection to provide surge protection on the cable line that services your cable modem. Remember, the more protection, the better.

Check your protection devices regularly. If you use

battery backup systems, use the testing feature at least quarterly to make sure your unit still functions properly.

Batteries in backup systems will typically last two or three years, unless your power environment is particularly troublesome.

Remember, too, that not all power problems result from electrical storms.

The every day variances in power quality - from smaller surges, sags, drops and brownouts - will also, over time, cause damage to your electronic equipment.

When you invest in a high-quality surge protector, many of them will also compensate for these minor electrical fluctuations, protecting your equipment at its own expense. These are called line conditioning surge protectors.

Higher end line conditioning surge protectors will wear out and lose effectiveness after a few years, and should be replaced.



Defragging Your Hard Drive Can Make Your PC Run Faster

Defragging your hard drive is one of the most overlooked PC maintenance tasks, yet one of the simplest ways to keep your PC running fast.

When your files are organized, your hard drive has to work less to retrieve data, which speeds up the computer.

In Windows XP, open My Computer and right-click the hard drive, then click Properties and look under the Tools tab.

You will select the hard drive you want to defragment and click Analyze to see the state of the drive. The computer will take a moment to test the hard disk, then show you a graphical representation of the drive. Mostly

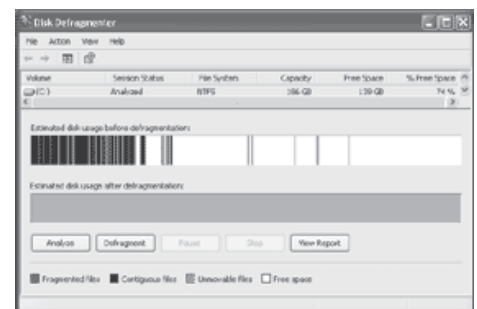
blue bands indicate a healthy state on contiguous files.

Scattered red bands indicate fragmented files. If you have a lot of these, Windows will prompt you to defrag and you should accept when ready.

You'll want to schedule your defrag, since you won't be able to use the PC while this utility is running. Consider doing this when you leave the office for the day - it could take a few hours to complete depending on drive size.

If defragmenter produces errors, consider running defrag from within Safe Mode, where most services are stopped and nothing is using the drive.

How often you defrag the hard



drive depends on your usage. If you constantly add and remove large files, you will need to do this often. If you do general PC work like checking Emails, working on spreadsheets, etc you will only need to perform this task about every two months.



Professional System Cleanings Are Essential To A Problem-Free Summer Computing Season

We spend a lot of time talking with clients, and writing in our newsletters, about the importance of keeping your systems clean from spyware, pop-ups and viruses. With the warm weather of summer approaching, it's important to talk about physically cleaning your PCs.

The dirt, dust and debris that accumulate inside your computer's case and power supply acts just like insulation, and can make your system run much hotter than it should.

As this extra heat builds up, it can cause erratic operation, lockups, random shutdowns, and in some cases, even data loss.

Tech Experts provides a comprehensive, professional system cleaning service that starts at just \$39 per PC, with discounts available for multiple machines.

Our 15-point inspection program is designed to keep your equipment running smoothly, and to pinpoint potential problem areas before they turn into expensive repairs.

If you're an adventurous sort, and would like to tackle this task yourself, here are some tips:

1) Compressed air is your friend - but make sure you get the "greenhouse gas friendly" canisters. If this is the first time you've cleaned your computer, and you've had it a while, you will probably need several cans.

Start by disconnecting all of your cables and power cord, and open the PC's case and take it outside if there's a lot of dust inside.



Give it a few quick blasts from the can, with the goal of getting all the dust bunnies out of the box. Avoid extended spraying, as the air that comes out of the can is quite cold, and can cause condensation to build up on the electronic parts if you hold the spray button down too long.

Use the nozzle straw attachment to get to hard to reach places like under the motherboard, between the cables, and through the internal air vents.



Photograph of an actual client's computer. Notice the lint accumulated on the CPU cooling assembly. This machine was suffering from random reboots. After our professional cleaning service, the client reported no more problems!

2) Now turn your attention to the rest of the computer. Particularly, dust out the fans and intake grills, paying special attention to the power supply. If you have a notebook, this is even more important, since these fans are especially prone to clogging.

3) Clean your keyboard, since you have the canned air handy. A few quick sprays will send whatever you've accumulated in the keyboard (hair, dust, crumbs, etc.) flying out. Next, you'll want to clean the surface of the keyboard. Most are pretty tough, so any regular multi-purpose cleaner should work. We prefer to use glass cleaner, such as Windex. Be sure to spray the cleaner on a cloth, and not directly on the keyboard. Wipe the keyboard thoroughly, getting off any gunk or debris that is fixed to the keys.

4) You can use the same technique on your mouse, which you can clean on all sides, but pay special attention to the underside. Mice pick up a lot of junk on the bottom, so just scrape off anything that accumulated there. If you still are using a non-optical mouse (one with a little ball inside), pop the cover off, use a damp cloth to clean the rubber ball, and use a cotton swab dipped in alcohol to clean the rollers.

5) You can clean your screen just like you would a window, using any mild commercial glass cleaner. Again, be sure you spray the cleaner onto a cloth, and wipe with that, and do not spray the cleaner directly onto the screen.

Or, just give us a call at (734) 457-5000 and schedule our techs to do your system cleanings for you!



“We make all of your computer problems go away without the cost of a full-time IT staff!”

Ask us about our fixed price service agreements - Computer support at a flat monthly fee you can budget for, just like rent!



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Monroe, Michigan 48161
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info@expertsmi.com

New, Noteworthy Or Need To Know

This Isn't Really Related To Computers, But Please Read It Anyway

An article a few months ago in Business 2.0 Magazine talked about how Wal-Mart was really pushing compact fluorescent (CF) light bulbs as a way to save energy.

If you're not familiar with CF bulbs, you've probably seen them - they're funny looking, spiraled light bulbs.

Now, we're automatically dubious of anything Wal-Mart might be promoting, but we went ahead and tried a few of these bulbs.

They take a little getting used to. For example, there's sometimes a slight (1-2 second) delay when you flick the switch, as compared to regular bulbs, which start instantly.

If CF bulbs are cold, they may initially be dimmer than normal, and brighten up over 60 to 90 seconds.

The bulbs cost as much as five times the cost of a regular bulb. But, the electrical cost savings are pretty dramatic - they use about 80% less electricity than regular bulbs. Plus, they last almost 10 times as long as regular bulb. In the long run, they're quite a money saver.

At home, we've replaced most of our regular light bulbs with CF bulbs, and have a **notable, demonstrated drop of almost \$25 per month on our electric bill.**

Take a few minutes to Google "compact fluorescent" and check them out for yourself. You'll be happy with the cost savings.

Speed Up Your PC By Limiting Startup Programs

Most versions of Windows use a utility called msconfig, which gives you the ability to control what programs automatically startup each time you boot your machine.

Some programs, like your software firewall and your antivirus, are essential startup programs because they protect your PC. However, there are other programs that do not need to load, and preventing them from loading will speed up your boot time and save memory.

Aside from the msconfig utility, there are a couple of other ways to remove these startup programs.

If you look down by your system clock, you will likely see several icons

belonging to auto-run programs.

Try right-clicking some of them, and in their preferences menu you may find a way to disable them from loading at startup. You can also check the startup folder, which is located by navigating through your Start menu, then Programs, then Startup. Some of the programs here can simply be removed by deleting them. Deleting them will not delete the program itself.

You will need to make the decision what to remove using the techniques above. If you are unsure, then leave it. But minimizing the programs that hog system resources at boot is a quick way to improve system performance.

Spring time is the best time for your computer checkup!

As temperatures warm up, dust and debris that accumulate inside your computers can act just like insulation, making them run much hotter than they should. This can cause lockups, freezing and costly downtime.

Our 15 point system inspection is designed to keep your computer equipment running smoothly, and pinpoint potential problem areas before they turn into **expensive** repairs.

*Spring System Checkup
Just \$39 per computer!*

Volume pricing available for 5 or more systems.
Limited time offer.



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