
From your friends on the Internet ... It's a VIRUS!

During my years as an IT professional and experience as a computer and network troubleshooter, I've seen this scenario time and time again: You're all set. You've just upgraded your internet connection to DSL; your computer has the latest processor and a huge hard drive; everything on your system is fully configured and customized. So WHY doesn't your computer seem to perform very well? Hmm, maybe it's infected.

Computer viruses have been around for well over a decade. Remember the Michaelangelo virus? It "detonated" on March 6th, 1992 reeking havoc on all PCs that bore its signature. Nowadays, of course, we have even more tenacious viruses that can read your e-mail address book, send themselves to everyone on the list and lay "dormant" while repeating the process on other machines, awaiting the right moment to strike.

Scared? Concerned?

You shouldn't be scared, but you ought to be concerned. Virus attacks have become a major expense for the corporate world. Back in the year 1993, the cost of viruses (protection, cleaning, lost data, time and materials) was over \$1 billion in lost profits (remember, that's pre-Enron and Tyco "creative" accounting issues). It was noted by the National Computer Security Association in 1991, that over 50% of corporation in North America with over 400 computers reported virus attacks within their computer systems. In today's world, the numbers are probably even higher!!!

So, what can you do to protect yourself? One method used by the U.S. government for high security is a computer separate from all networks. Will this work for you? It might, but not if you want to use the Internet or connect to other computers on a network. Fortunately, some resourceful companies now offer commercial protection from viruses. Here is a partial list in alphabetical order:

- Computer Associates – InocuLAN IT and eTrust AV
- F-Secure Antivirus Solutions
- Network Associates – McAfee Security (bought out Dr. Solomon's AV)
- Panda Software – Antivirus
- SonicWall Complete Antivirus
- Symantec – Norton AntiVirus
- Trend Micro – PC-cillin

The way these companies earn their keep is not only by devising software that can identify a virus, but by maintaining a current list of virus signatures available online or via CD for the end user to download and update to their program.

To simplify the antivirus program, imagine that it has three parts:

1. The Antivirus program
2. The virus definitions
3. The memory resident program which constantly defends your computer

When you install an antivirus program on your computer, you install it through the program itself. The program is dependent upon the virus signatures to identify and quarantine or delete the files corrupted with the viruses. The AV programs now carry the capability to identify even polymorphous viruses (those that change their appearance and "evolve"). Once the computers storage has been scanned and cleaned, the computer is rebooted (restarted) to enable the memory resident component of the antivirus program to protect the computer in an ongoing basis.

Who needs an antivirus program? Most people could genuinely benefit from the protection of an antivirus program. They are relatively low priced (up to \$69), typically have promotions and rebates and are truly a worthwhile investment, particularly if you "surf the 'Net" (renewals are substantially cheaper). If you want to see an update on the latest and greatest viruses around, visit The Symantec Antivirus Research Center (SARC). There you will see a listing of why you need protection. Whether you buy into conspiracy theories or not, it's a good idea to use one of these programs.

If you have a question or would like to have a concept explained, please feel free to send an email to support@tech4now.com. If you feel you have an urgent issue that needs immediate attention, you may indicate that in your email or call us at (201) 797-5050 for service.