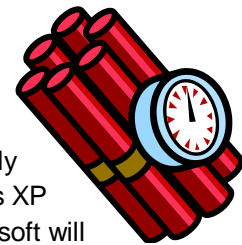## In This Months TechPoints

- Windows XP is a Ticking Time Bomb
- Back to School Tech Trends for 2013
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- Save Money With Free Software for Your Computer

Windows XP is a Ticking Time Bomb

By Nick LaBonte, Field Technician, TechSolutions

Windows XP has been one of, if not the most popular operating system (OS) to ever sweep the PC world. After 12 years XP still is estimated to run on approximately 1/3 of computers worldwide. Yet all good things must come to an end, and Windows XP is likely to go out with a bang! Hackers are waiting for April 8th, 2014, the day Microsoft will stop supporting Windows XP. Losing support does not mean XP machines will stop functioning after the 8th, instead it means Microsoft will no longer issue updates. An occasion which Hackers are eagerly waiting to detonate the fuse on Windows XP with an explosion of viruses.

During the time while Microsoft is supporting an OS or software such as Office, they will provide updates to improve performance and fix vulnerability and security issues. When a vulnerability or security issue is discovered, it is patched and an update pushed out shortly after. If the security issue is severe, a patch will be pushed out immediately. What this means for XP is that after April 8th, if a vulnerability or security hole is discovered by Hackers it will stay open for them to exploit. You may think that having active anti-virus software will be enough, but it can only do so much.

Once vulnerabilities are discovered it is the same as having a door in your house that you cannot lock, and robbers know about it. You can kick them out once you find them, but damage can be done, the lock will never be fixed, and it will be a constant battle to keep your house safe. This is the same for vulnerabilities in XP. Your anti-virus might be able to stop the attacks once they are on your computer, but it cannot prevent them from trying to exploit that vulnerability.

Jason Foosen, an expert on Microsoft Security, believes that Hackers are waiting to release viruses and malicious code to attack Windows XP machines heavily after April 8th. These viruses can be anything from a key logger to steal credit card and personal information, to a program that can turn your PC into a quasi-server to send spam to thousands of computers. Then how can one protect XP machines? The short answer is you cannot, but there are options.

The simplest solution is to remove the XP computer from the Internet. But in the information world we live in, this is probably not a viable choice. The next step is to evaluate the PC you are using. Based on how old it is, it may be best to upgrade to a new PC that will have either Windows 7 or Windows 8 installed. Or you may find that you can keep your current PC and simply upgrade from XP to a newer operating system. Whether you keep your current PC or not, the solution will be to dump XP and move on to Windows 7 or 8. Even though Windows 8 was recently released, Windows 7 is not outdated. Windows 7

is set to receive support from Microsoft until January of 2020, with Windows 8 support ending in the year 2023. Realistically, both upgrade options will suit you well over the average life of a PC, which is around 5 years.

If you have concerns with upgrading due to a few vital programs that require XP in order to run, have no fear. Windows 7 Professional allows you to run a virtual copy of Windows XP for any old programs you may need. Although this virtual copy of XP will be vulnerable, it will not be able to infect the Windows 7 portion. In addition, if the virtual copy of XP is not used for Internet browsing or email, the chances for infection are very low. Unfortunately this feature was removed in Windows 8.

While Windows XP will always hold a special place in the heart of PC users, it is time to say goodbye. Microsoft has improved upon XP in almost every way with Windows 7, leaving few excuses not to upgrade. In less than a year April 8th, 2014 will be here, and support for XP will be gone. If you use or are responsible for XP machines, you need to plan and prepare for the end of the Windows XP, the ticking time bomb in your office.

Back to School Tech Trends for 2013

([NewsUSA](#)) - With summer vacation winding down, the U.S. Census Bureau expects close to 80 million children and adults to head back to the classroom. Total school spending this year is targeted at over $70 billion with $8 billion for electronics. Emmy-winning tech and trends expert Brett Larson and host of KillerApps.TV looked at some products and trends that should be on the radar for back to school shopping this year.

"There is an array of new tech tools that can help propel a student to a more successful school year!" says Brett. "Do your research online for not only the best price, but look for the tech that will grow with you throughout the year."

Some of Brett's top picks for Back to School 2013:

1. The VTech InnoTab 3S is the next generation of children's learning tablets with Wi-Fi. Built for ages 3-9, it features VTech Kid Connect -- an exclusive communication app that allows kids to be connected with their parents and friends. In addition, it accesses VTech's Learning Lodge -- providing kids with a bright start on their learning journey.

2. If you're in search of a smartphone, Brett says you need to find one with the processing speed, power and battery longevity to take full advantage of all its capabilities. Check out the new HTC One and Samsung Galaxy S4 for some of the fastest processing speeds.

3. Staples is a great place to get hands-on with tech before you buy. When searching for laptops, check out the latest Chromebooks. They are easy-to-use, lightweight laptops that run the popular Google operating system. Their portability and ease of use make them perfect for youngsters just learning how to use technology in the classroom.

4. Brett says, "Don't lose your data!" He likes Carbonite Online Backup for automatically backing up computer files whenever the computer is connected to the Internet, and features anytime, anywhere access, so users can remotely access their protected files from any Internet-connected device, including computers, smartphones and tablets.

5. A must-have dorm accessory, the stylish and compact Keurig MINI Plus Brewer. With over 250 K-Cup pack varieties to choose from, including coffee, tea, iced beverages and more, college students can choose their perfect beverage for a jumpstart on the day, an afternoon pick-me-up or a late-night study session. They come in a wide array of colors so you can select a brewer that matches your personality.

How to Protect Yourself From Laptop Larceny
By Jennifer Thayer

Laptops are more than just a gadget to most users. More often than not laptops will contain passwords, addresses, banking and credit card numbers and personal information. If a laptop is stolen, it won't take a smart thief long to break into the account and gain access to personal and important information.

According to LoJack, two million laptops are stolen each year and as computing devices get smaller that number will get bigger. While you may not always get your computer back, there are some steps you can take to decrease the damage done.

Be Proactive

It sounds simple, but always be mindful of your computer. Don't leave it on the table while you refill your coffee and don't leave it unattended in your car or office. Most thieves commit crimes of opportunity, so don't give them one.

Also, consider installing a theft protection feature. Lenovo offers ConstantSecure Remote Disable for their new [ThinkPad tablet pc models](#). If your laptop is stolen you can send a text message to the laptop disabling it. The unit will power down completely and will not restart until a re-activation key is entered. While this won't protect your hardware investment, it will protect your information from thieves interested in more than wiping the hard drive and selling your laptop.

You can also invest in recovery software. Companies like ComputraceComplete and PCPhoneHome can be purchased for $30 to 50 a year and offer you a chance at getting your laptop back. These companies connect your laptop periodically to a main server. When this happens the agency can tell you exactly where your laptop is and notify the police to recover it.

Damage Control

Once you realize your laptop is missing contact the police and file a report noting the model and serial number. Go through all your accounts and change passwords. Create new high protection passwords (containing numbers, letters and symbols) quickly, before the thief beats you to it and locks you out of your accounts.

Keep an eye on your bank accounts and let your bank and credit card companies know that your information may have been stolen so they can issue a fraud alert and monitor your accounts for suspicious activity.

Losing a laptop is hard but fighting identity theft is harder. Take the proper steps to protect yourself and your information. If the worse happens, stay calm and take the time to perform damage control. It may not give you back your laptop but it may give you a little piece of mind.

Save Money With Free Software for Your Computer

([NewsUSA](#)) - Looking to save money? There are ways to leverage great technology without burning a hole in your wallet. Here are some safe, secure options -- all of them free -- that can help make your computer more productive, useful and fun:

- Firefox Browser: (www.GetFireFox.com) -- Get onto the Internet with this alternative to Windows Internet Explorer that is compatible with both Macs and PCs. It is fast and secure and allows you to download lots of free plug-ins that provide information, social media integration and multimedia capabilities.

- TweetDeck: (www.TweetDeck.com) -- This free program enables you to easily manage, monitor and post to all of your social media networks, including Facebook, Twitter and MySpace, from one place.

- Trillian: (www.Trillian.im) -- Not everyone uses the same instant message service. You might use AOL while your friend uses Yahoo. Trillian lets you combine all of your instant message accounts -- AOL, Yahoo, MSN, ICQ and IRC -- into one program. Recently updated, it can integrate your Facebook and Twitter accounts, too.

- LogMeIn: (www.LogMeIn.com) -- The free version of LogMeIn lets you securely access your computer from anywhere in the world. Want to check your home computer while you're on the road? Go to a web browser from any Internet-enabled computer or mobile device, and log in to your account to instantly connect and access any programs, files, photos or music on your desktop.

- Picasa: (www.picasa.google.com) – Google's Picasa is a free alternative to Photoshop and offers photo-editing capabilities such as cropping, resizing, sharpening and red-eye reduction. You can add special effects, fonts, or various shapes to turn your precious memory into a work of art.

Any or all of these programs will immediately add value to your Mac, PC or laptop -- at absolutely no cost. Do your homework first and check out product reviews from reputable technology sites such as CNET's Download.com to find out more about free and safe software options before you install them on your computer.