VIRUS PROTECTION AND OTHER SECURITY CONCERNS

By Roy Gordon

The purpose of this article is to make you familiar with a number of various virus protections that are available to you absolutely free of charge. This article will not attempt to tell you which virus protection is best as we really have no way of knowing. It also will not address the various paid virus suites. Paid or free, if you read the various publications such as computer magazines or even Consumer Reports you will see that none of them are in agreement.

There are three things to keep in mind when thinking about virus protection:

1. No virus protection can guarantee that you will never get a virus. In order to protect your computer, the virus protection must be aware that a particular virus is out there. This means that the virus is created and sent out to infect computers before the virus protection is even aware that it exists. There are tell-tale signs that a file might be a virus (called heuristic signs) and your protection will look for these signs, but it can't be sure to catch every one of them.

2. The best virus protection is useless if it is not kept up to date on a daily (or more frequent) basis. There are numerous new viruses sent out every day, and if you do not keep your virus protection up to date your computer will be totally vulnerable.

3. YOU CAN ONLY HAVE ONE VIRUS PROTECTION PROGRAM ON YOUR COMPUTER. If you attempt to install more than one virus protection they will recognize each other as possible viruses, and the result will be a very, very slow computer, or one that does not even work. Most of them will allow you to have anti malware and anti-spyware programs, although lately we are hearing that some virus protection programs interfere with those also.

Here are some of the free virus protections that you can consider for your computer. (They are not listed in any particular order)

AVAST: (www.avast.com)

This seems to be a very competent program. It updates your computer every time you turn it on, then updates again every 6 hours. It has a number of options that you can use, and does not seem to have problems with other programs such as malwarebytes and super antispyware. Consumer Reports puts it in 3rd place among free virus protection programs.

PANDACLOUD: http://www.cloudantivirus.com/en/

Why anyone would name their product "Panda" is beyond me, but the program seems to be very good. In fact, one publication called it the best antivirus available. The advantage to this program is that it is a "cloud" program, which means everything is on their server, not your computer. Ordinarily a virus protection program downloads thousands of virus definitions to your computer. Panda, being a cloud based program, keeps them all on their server. A real advantage to this is that any time they hear of a new virus they can immediately put it on their server and not have to wait to download it to all of their clients. That way your virus protection is always up to date. It also has a very simple interface – in fact, it is so simple that it has been criticized for not given you all the options that you may want.

MICROSOFT SECURITY ESSENTIALS:

Go to www.microsoft.com and click on Security, then click on Microsoft Security Essentials. The download button is there, as well as all the information about the program. This is a very good, complete program that will do its utmost to keep you safe, and there are no options being thrown at you to get you to buy a more complete version. Our only complaint is that it can create problems if you try to install spyware or malware programs on the same computer. Consumer Reports ranks it as #4 of 4 programs.

AVG: www.avg.com

AVG is a very well-known and very popular anti-virus program. As with most of these programs, they offer a free version but will do everything they can to sell you a full security suite. I had used AVG free for a long time and was very happy with it, although on a couple of instances it would not let me download

a perfectly safe program and gave me no options to override it without completely uninstalling AVG. In fact, one of the programs that it said did not meet their criteria was the Apple Music Store. Not too long ago AVG downloaded an updated version, and things started to go wrong on my computer. I read several posts on Smart Computing Magazine, and others also seemed to be having problems with the new version. One of the more technically savvy folks wrote in that the new version of AVG would not allow any spyware or malware programs on the computer, and also required Windows Firewall to be turned off. While I cannot verify any of this information, my computer turned back to its own good self when I uninstalled AVG. However, the June issue of Consumer Reports puts AVG in the number 2 spot in their ratings of free anti-virus programs.

If you do want to get the free version, you will probably find it to be a daunting task. There is a download button for the free trial, but that is not what you really want. To find the free version you need to type AVG Free in the little search box at the top right corner of the page. Only then will the free download button open.