

Windows XP R.I.P.

The day has finally come and gone. That day being April 8th, when Microsoft announced they were concluding support for the Windows XP operating system. (They also ended support for Office 2003 at the same time.) From all the press announcements and Web activity, one might have guessed the world was coming to an end as well. But, just like your computer that is running XP, the world kept on running! Should you be worried? Not really. But it's a good time to consider making some changes to your PC and that's what this article is about.

How does this decision affect you? Other than adding another worry to your life, not a whole lot, at least in the short term. About the biggest concern is the pain of having to click away the pesky pop ups informing you that support has ended. But ask yourself WHEN was the last time you CALLED Microsoft for support? If you're like most folks that last time was never. So in a nutshell, April 8th means the service you never used, will no longer be available.

Applications will continue to run as they have in the past. Even your Anti-virus software will continue to run, but it might appear like you are in *danger*, and appear **red** to catch your attention. If this is the case, you're most likely running Microsoft Security Essentials. Oh it's still working just fine, but if the red warning disturbs you, The Tech Guys can remove it and install a variety of other free [anti-virus tools](#) that won't be so annoying.

Then why did this announcement get so much press? Good question! We can't really answer that, but from our perspective, Microsoft really wants to improve sales of Windows 8 and a lot of PC vendors want to improve sales since Windows 8 has been hurting their PC sales! As a result of this panic, a lot of folks are buying replacement computers and they aren't thinking a lot about their purchases. It's our feeling that a new PC may be in the cards, but there is no reason to make that decision under duress.

So I should just ignore the announcement and just resume life as before? Maybe. But maybe not. The announcement has one important aspect to it that is worth noting. And that is the end of any more Windows Updates, including security patches, for XP. We all know how many patches MS seems to send out these days, and I'm sure they weren't done by April 8th. When you figure they had more than 10 years to secure the system, they clearly still had issues. Until April 8th, when MS published the security patches, the world learned about the vulnerability. It was important to update soon after the patch was released in order to protect your system from that [now] known vulnerability. Going forward, these patches aren't going to happen. The only way the vulnerability is going to get published is within the

hacker circles. And, over time, there will be plenty of them to use when they need them. Over time, your system, even with anti-virus software, will become more vulnerable to these exploits. That's why, in the long run, you will want to upgrade to something newer like Windows 7 or 8.1.

So, what's involved with the "upgrade"? The term is often used too loosely.

In reality, you have two options: **Upgrade**, where everything, more or less remains the same except the operating system becomes a newer version, or **Replace**, where everything is new, except for your data. This can be on new PC hardware, or your existing hardware.

Let's talk about the upgrade. For starters, we don't recommend it unless your hardware is less than four years old, and it has a Core 2 duo or better, such as an "i" series Intel processor. We will try to come up with similar recommendations for AMD processors soon. Of course you can use wimpier processors—this is just our recommendation. Assuming you clear the hurdle in age and processor, we need to make sure your PC has drivers for the newer operating system. Since Windows 7 has been out for at least four years, this is usually not a problem, but if we're pushing that four year limit a tad, you may find the PC only has Vista drivers. If so, your options are limited. But, assuming all is good so far, you have the option to upgrade. It also is suggested you visit the [Microsoft Upgrade Advisor for Windows 7](#) or the [Upgrade Advisor for Windows 8](#)

The upgrade involves two steps because MS didn't like users who wanted to remain on XP when Vista came out. So, there is only an upgrade to Vista. What we do is first upgrade to Vista, and then immediately upgrade to Windows 7. We do not suggest upgrading any further (if you really want Windows 8, then we suggest buying a new computer.) The whole process can take many hours usually somewhere between 3-6 hours by the clock, however if done at our office instead of yours, we charge a flat rate for only two hours. In the end, your system is running Windows 7 and all your favorite applications most likely are all running fine. For the few systems that have issues, we usually can adjust your system to apply compatibility tweaks to make them happy. In addition to the two hours labor; you may need to purchase a Windows 7 license.

The replacement option actually has two paths. One is to replace your current system with new hardware, and the other is to reuse your current hardware. Like the upgrade path, the reuse of your current hardware option should only be considered when the system meets all of the requirements for doing the in-place upgrade. The difference in the end is that you will be using 64-bit Windows 7. Why should this matter? It's really all about how the system uses memory and you can take advantage of more RAM with a 64-bit system. (32-bit only can use 3.25GB) In general, all 32-bit applications will run fine in the 64-bit operating system. And drivers, which are always different in 64-bit, can run more efficiently and often quicker. We've seen three-year-old systems that seemed ready for retirement, spring to life with a fresh load of Windows 7/64-bit.

Replacement means you have some work to do when you get your system returned to you. All of your applications will have disappeared because you have a NEW install of the operating

system. Only your data is there. If you only use Internet Explorer, and Microsoft Office, you really should consider the replacement option because it will feel pretty much like an upgrade, but you'll have a CLEAN install of the operating system which always makes a system run smoother and quicker. Folks with a LOT, (and I mean a lot) of installed applications will need to remember where they can find the application installers to replace the applications they still use. Some very old applications may not install on the new operating system. These applications were often written for an operating system that pre-dated Windows XP, such as Windows 95 (or even Windows 3.1!) Without the installation source for your applications, your chances of getting the application running again are low.

Replacement installations are only needed if you plan to use your existing hardware. We offer such upgrades for a fixed rate of two hours, and include the installation of MS Office (supplied by you) in that service. A Windows 7 license is required as well. We are working on finding the best rate - - prices are available upon request. The service includes the time needed to migrate your data away to a temp location, the re-formatting of your current hard drive, and installation of the new operating system. The service then includes the time to replace your data back onto the new system and optionally installing a new version of MS-office.

Is it just time to get a new Pc? The answer very well may be YES. It's certainly a great excuse! If your system is over five years old, a new one will certainly be quicker, and far less likely to have components failing anytime soon. We rarely find a situation where doing a replacement upgrade on your existing hardware makes sense, unless you recently purchased the hardware and had your original XP system retrofitted in order to maintain your applications. Even then, the upgrade solution may make more sense unless you have realized that all those old applications you thought you used are no longer in use and the replacement option now makes sense. If you're one of the fortunate ones that use popular software that can be found on-line, or you have saved the installers then going the replacement path is strongly suggested, in order to put yourself on a solid future footing with a new 64-bit operating system.

Isn't there a way to have my cake and eat it too? Well, yes. But you're going to want new hardware for that. Of course, there are some hybrid solutions too, but they are meant more for the exceptions rather than the norm. In a hybrid solution, we might take a new PC, usually running Windows 7, and we migrate your whole Windows XP system (the software, that is) to a virtual PC running within the new Windows 7 PC. It doesn't get rid of your XP PC, but gives you the option of being able to easily continue running those ancient applications, while mostly running all the new apps on the new operating system. Since this configuration requires a custom configuration, call us for time estimates if you are interested.

As always, if you have questions, don't hesitate to call us. But whichever way you decide to go, there is no need to panic. You'll get through this.