

Windows XP SP2

Windows XP Service Pack 2 (SP2) is now available to the general public. There will be several ways that consumers can obtain this release:

- ▣ Available on CD from Microsoft at: <http://www.microsoft.com/protect>
- ▣ Over the internet through automatic Windows updates
- ▣ Over the internet through Windows update portal at:
<http://v4.windowsupdate.microsoft.com/en/default.asp>
- ▣ Over the internet by downloading the complete SP2 install package at:
<http://www.microsoft.com/technet/prodtechnol/winxppro/maintain/winxpsp2.mspx>

What you need to know before installing SP2!

SP2 provides many new security features in addition to the cumulative fixes released since the introduction of SP1. However it is very important to note that there are incompatibilities with some hardware/software that may cause problems with your particular configuration. Any incompatibilities will have to be resolved through the vendor of your hardware/software or through a technician at your expense.

If you do install SP2, but later find that it causes problems, it can be uninstalled (Control Panel > Add Remove Programs). **However, proceed at your own risk.** Customer that have a LAN may need to reconfigure Windows security (Firewall settings). These customers should contact their network administrator before installing SP2 on their workstation. **It should be noted that many people have complained that their computers are noticeably slower with SP2 installed.**

Here are a list of improvement and possible incompatibilities:

▣ Improved Firewall

Windows XP's new firewall is now turned-on by default for all network connections. This may result in problems with print servers, etc. Also, when incoming or outgoing traffic is detected for the first time, Windows firewall will display a pop-up dialog box asking you to either "allow" or "block" this traffic. This can be annoying, but intended to make the user responsible for security.

Firewall features will be accessible from the new control panel "Security" applet, which will allow you to tweak the settings, or turn-off the firewall completely. If you have a network that shares an internet connection, then you probably have a router with a built-in firewall. In this case, the Windows firewall is not required to prevent "normal" outside intrusion. The new Windows firewall can add a second layer of defense, and prevent users within your network from gaining access to your

computer, or in some cases, prevent your system from accessing others. It is not normally possible for a hacker to gain access to your computer through a hardware router unless there is Trojan software installed that can bypasses security. This is why it is very important to have a good anti-virus program installed and updated.

▣ Improved Internet Explorer

Internet Explorer (IE) now has a built-in pop-up blocker as well as new security to block malicious code. And now IE includes an Add-On manager to allow you to control all of your currently installed Ad-ons.

▣ Other Improvements

New Wireless Connection Manager
Enhanced Automatic Updates
Better BlueTooth Support
Improved "Add/Remove Programs" applet
Windows Media Player Enhancements

Conclusion

SP2 will quickly become an important upgrade to Windows XP. However, some of these enhancements are already provided by third-party vendors including pop-up blockers and firewalls. Because of possible software incompatibilities and possible problems with the enhanced firewall, we are recommending to our clients to wait for a period of up to 6 months before deploying SP2. This will give Genesys Micro enough time to fully evaluate possible problems that might arise in the corporate environment, as well as give time for software developers to post any fixes for software incompatibilities. If you do decide to install SP2 please remember to backup your data before proceeding.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call Genesys Micro at 304-267-0433.

Dictionary

Firewall – a software program that prevents network intrusion. This is accomplished by various methods including analyzing network traffic packets, blocking TCP/IP ports, and network address translation (converting private IP address to a public IP address). Can also be "hard coded" into a router or similar hardware device.

Trojan – Malicious code (aka malware) that usually compromises security or damages systems by executing commands that cause harm to a system. They are not classified as viruses because they do not replicate.

Malware - any software that specifically designed to damage or disrupts a computer system. Viruses and Trojans are examples.