# 5 REASONS TO UPDATE WINDOWS

XP TO SERVICE PACK2

Microsoft released Service Pack 2 (SP2) for the Windows XP operating system back in August (2004), representing significant improvements in many areas, especially system security. For those people that are still unsure whether they should update to it, the following five reasons may help make the decision easier.

1. Protects Against Unsafe Attachments / Downloads
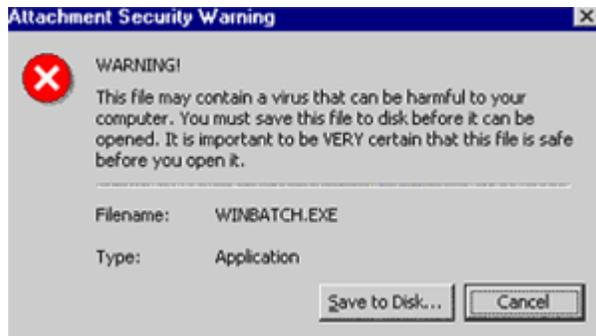
Service Pack 2 provides Windows XP with a "Windows Security Center", and other key tools, to help protect the user's system from unsafe attachments and downloads. This type of protection is one step to prevent viruses and Trojans from slipping onto a user's system and wreaking the type of havoc that has become an increasing problem in recent years.

One way it does this is through warnings in Internet Explorer's "Information Bar", which alert a user to potentially unsafe downloads. The suspect content is blocked automatically, and no action is taken until the user manually addresses the warning. Unsafe file attachments are now also blocked in a similar manner via Internet Explorer and Outlook Express, thus protecting not only web based content, but also items received via e-mail.

Another way it protects from unsafe files is by monitoring the system's anti-virus software and alerting the user if the system is at risk due to the software being out of date. Although Microsoft does not offer any virus protection themselves, this feature makes sure that whatever program the user has decided to use stays current and as effective as possible.

2. Windows Firewall

A software based firewall is included with Service Pack 2, intended to protect the system from access by unauthorized individuals on the internet or local network. The firewall is activated automatically by Windows, but users have the option to disable it, as well as to create exceptions to bypass the security in certain situations.

When utilized, the protection is active from startup to shutdown, providing a simple firewall solution to any computer with SP2 installed. Small pop up style windows are generated to alert the user of possible attempts to access the system from the outside, as well as when programs try to go out onto the internet. These pop ups are approved/denied by the user before anything is allowed to happen, and can be done so that a pop up will appear again next time this event occurs, or so that the pop up will never appear again for that particular event.

Many users with broadband internet connections have a hardware firewall in their router, but a software firewall such as this is still a good idea. It can protect where the hardware firewall can not, and is particular useful in preventing the system from launching any attacks from Trojans that may have slipped in.

3. Internet Pop Up Blocker

With Service Pack 2, Internet Explorer now features an integrated pop up blocker

to help reduce, if not fully eliminate, the presence of those nuisance ads.

Configurable from Internet Explorer's "Tools" tab, users can customize their

preferences and even turn the pop up blocker off. Considering most pop up

blockers require a special toolbar or other application be installed, this one is

extremely convenient and easy to use.

4. Increased Privacy Protection

Your privacy is protected more so than ever with Service Pack 2 in a few

different ways. If items 1, 2, and 3 above weren't enough, there is more… For

example, Windows XP with SP2 now applies security settings to further guard

your PC and your private information from exploit via Internet Explorer.

Another way your privacy is protected is by Outlook Express blocking images within e-mails that allow spammers to validate your address. Spammers use images that are tagged with unique bits of code, and once the URL of the image sent to you is viewed, the spammers know that they have a valid address, which makes that address more susceptible to future spam.

5. Simplify Wireless Networking

The popularity of wireless networking has exploded as the hardware has becoming increasingly simpler to operate and relatively inexpensive. Now the way a user connects their system to a wireless network has been greatly simplified via enhancements found in SP2. The "Wireless Network Setup Wizard" will lead a user of any expertise through the installation process, and the "Microsoft Broadband Network Utility" will help them monitor and maintain the network just as easily. Application of security settings is obviously a main component of these improvements, insuring that the user's system is protected from this angle of attack as well.

Source: http://www.geeks.com/techtips/2004/techtips-02dec04.htm