

## Service Pack 2

Anyone who works in the computer industry knows that Microsoft is about to release a new service pack for their Windows operating system. This is going to be the most important service pack ever released by Microsoft because it will allegedly help limit the number of security flaws exposed in Windows XP. A service pack is a software update that will include any critical updates and software updates into one downloadable file. Service Pack 2 will be a free download available from Microsoft's web site by the end of Summer 2004. Unfortunately the service pack is very large, 100-300 Megs depending on the configuration of the computer, and will take a very long time to download over a dialup network. The improvements will be well worth the wait however.

The new service pack will include a new Security Center that will consolidate any third party firewall and virus protection software and will report the condition of that software and the status of any windows critical updates. Also for those that do not have a firewall on their computer Microsoft has replaced the old practically useless firewall with a newly improved firewall. This new firewall still does not include as many features that Zone Alarm offers but it does allow the user the ability to program the firewall to allow such things as file and print sharing which the old firewall would not allow. Also the new firewall can be programmed to allow two different profiles. A laptop user may have a less tight profile when using it in the office and then can switch to a more secure profile when using their laptop on a wireless network at the airport.

Microsoft has also updated Internet Explorer and Outlook Express in an attempt to limit the effect spy ware and Spam has on our computer system. Internet Explorer will now block any automated downloads that might be caused by Spyware and will include a pop up blocker. It will then record this information on a new Information Bar that will be at the top of Internet Explorer. Internet Explorer will also include a new tool that will consolidate all plug-ins. Plug-in are the add-on programs that are sometimes needed to display web pages properly such as active X controls and add on tool bars. If Internet Explorer becomes unstable because of a faulty add-on it will offer to disable that program so that you can continue surfing reliably.

As I mentioned earlier Outlook Express was also upgraded with this Service Pack. Outlook Express now blocks the display of any pictures or HTML content by default. This action will help protect your inbox from virus and information stealing Spyware. Outlook Express also now includes a new info bar that will allow the user to display the picture if you know for a fact that it is safe.

Microsoft is trying to do a better job of responding to customer complaints about security issues. In fact Microsoft even pulled software writers from their new operating system development team to finish this Service Pack more quickly. If you have questions about patching your Windows machine or have any other computer related question please call Thomas or Roger at 947-0749 or e-mail Thomas at [sales@computerdeponline.com](mailto:sales@computerdeponline.com).