Still running XP? What should you do?

As of April 8, 2014 Microsoft stopped supporting Windows XP. That venerable OS lasted 13 years and still commands almost 30% of the PC's currently in use. But… is it safe to continue using it? We think that depends on your situation.

Without security patches for XP it will surely become more vulnerable over time. Are you a home user or a business running XP? Those are 2 very different scenarios.

If you process credit cards or medical records pass through this computer you have a problem. Use of Windows XP or Office 2003 in a credit card processing environment is a violation of the Payment Card Industry (PCI) Data Security Standard (PCI-DSS v2.0) since it fails Requirement 6 by failing to protect PCs from known vulnerabilities.

In the health care arena Windows XP is definitely an issue. In fact, OCR has been very clear that unsupported systems are NOT compliant. They cited this routinely during the audits last year whenever identified. The challenge is with older EMR systems and the rest of the programs you use on a regular basis. You may face a financial burden in upgrading not only the OS to Windows 7 /8 (we suggest 7) but for these programs as well. It may possible to install your programs in compatibility mode but that will be on a case by case basis. Bottom line for business users is that computers running XP are obsolete and ready for replacement anyway.

Home users are in a somewhat different situation. If all you do is check email and surf the net you may be OK staying on XP a bit longer. Get a decent anti-virus (several are available for free), get all the latest patches prior to April 8 and you should be OK. This is a good time to think about backups. What do you do to secure all you pictures, documents, music in the event of a failure? Remote back is cheap insurance, get some.

The big question is how to do upgrade and what do you upgrade to? That's a topic for next month's article.