



MUG Monitor

Macon Users Group—Serving Southwestern North Carolina and Northeastern Georgia

Volume 16, Issue 8

www.maconusersgroup.org

August 2009

Next Meeting:

Google Earth

by Club President
Louis Vitale

Macon Community
Facilities Building
August 11th, 7 PM

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Microsoft Releases Free Beta of New Security Software

by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio Talk Show Host

Many of us love to kick Microsoft as the 600 pound gorilla who created the most popular computer operating systems and also attracted countless miscreants who locate and take advantage of security breaches. Microsoft has produced some very good security products, such as the anti-spyware product Windows Defender, and some mediocre products such as Windows Live OneCare. Now, Microsoft is releasing a free public beta of its newest incarnation of comprehensive security software code named "Morro", but publicly named "Microsoft Security Essentials" (MSE). The public beta release of MSE should be online by the time you read this, at www.microsoft.com/security_essentials. There are some reports that Microsoft will limit the number of beta downloads of MSE to 75,000.

MSE's final release version is scheduled to be available later this year, and is planned to be a free security package designed to protect the computer from viruses, spyware, rootkits, and Trojans. MSE will be replacing Microsoft's current commercial offering, Windows Live OneCare, which Microsoft announced will be discontinued as of June 30. Initial reports that have leaked from Microsoft indicate that MSE will be a low-end security product, competing against the wildly popular free offerings from AVG and Avast, but lacking the full featured security capabilities of such commercial powerhouses as McAfee, Norton-Symantec, and TrendMicro. MSE will be a free download, and will run on Windows XP, Vista, and the new Windows 7. Separate

installers will be available for 32-bit and 64-bit versions of Windows, and will vary from 3mb to 7mb in download size. It should be noted that only users of genuine licensed copies of Windows will be able to download and install MSE, as Microsoft claims that the MSE installer will be able to detect illicit copies of Windows and block the installation.

Preliminary anecdotal reports leaked about Morro, the precursor of MSE, indicate that it will install with a wizard that will require the uninstallation of any antivirus software that is on the computer before MSE can be installed. MSE will also deactivate Microsoft's Windows Defender anti-spyware if it is installed on the computer, as it will no longer be needed.

MSE will offer free frequent updates of virus and malware signatures, as well as system scans on demand and at scheduled times. MSE was designed to minimize the impact on system resources, and not significantly degrade system performance. The user interface (UI) is simple and clean, much like Windows Defender, and does not require any technical skills to properly operate. Microsoft designed MSE to be a simple but effective free security utility to protect Windows computers lacking effective antivirus and anti-spyware software. At present, it does not appear that MSE will be offering

(see *Morro* on page 2)

Google Earth
7 PM, August 11th

Macon Users Group Franklin, NC

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for contact information

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Monthly Meetings

MUG meets the second Tuesday of every month at 7 P.M. in the Macon County Community Facilities Building on Georgia Road (US 441 South).

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Website

www.maconusersgroup.org

(Morro—continued from page 1)

additional security features and benefits included in the top-selling commercial security suites. "This is security you can trust," said Alan Packer, general manager of Microsoft's anti-malware team, when asked to define how it differs from rivals, both free and not. "And it's easy to get and easy to use." "Rather than scan and clean, which it also does, it's trying to keep you from being infected in the first place," Packer said.

In addition to malware signatures which will be updated frequently, MSE will use a feature Microsoft calls "Dynamic Signature Service" which links the computer with MSE installed to Microsoft's servers. If MSE detects suspicious behavior, but does not have a digital malware signature in its database, MSE will query Microsoft's servers. "If it sees something new, like a new binary, the client queries the back end," Packer said. "The server can then ask for a sample, which the client sends as a hash." The user can control and consent to the sending of the potential malware to Microsoft, as MSE will ask for permission to send it. If Microsoft has already created a digital signature and remedy for the malware, the server will instantly push the signature to the computer. "We have a list of known good software, of course, but outside that, if a program is doing things like hooking Autostart points in the registry, or trying to kill other processes, Essential will query the servers." Packer said.

It is too early to tell about the quality of protection offered by MSE, as it has not yet been tested and rated by the independent services that test and rate security products. It also needs to be noted that the current software is a "beta" or pre-release version, and may contain unresolved bugs or other problems that will likely be resolved by the final release later this year. Still, if your PC is lacking effective security software, or your subscription to a commercial product is about to expire and you are willing to take the risk of having beta software provide basic protection to your computer, then Microsoft Security Essentials may be a worthwhile consideration.

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Treasurer's Report

Phyllis Minnich

Balance forward.....	798.20
Income: interest, dues, 50/50.....	2112.55
Expense.....	(298.55)
Balance*	
(including equipment fund).....	\$4227.81
*Equipment Fund (50/50, auction).....	31.00
Investment Fund.....	1615.61

Linux SIG

with Jim Swanson, Mentor

The Linux SIG will meet on Tuesday, August 25th at 7 p.m. in the large meeting room of the Macon County Public Library. Anyone interested in learning about Linux, talking about Linux, or showing how Linux works is invited to attend.

Lou's Views!

Google Earth 2.0

by Louis Vitale (aka 44RAILGUY)



This month I will be doing a reprise of my presentation on Google Earth. It is the program that keeps on giving. I have continued to find new elements and explore the depth of some of its most basic functions. This time I will spend more time on local content and how it is added to database Earth. I will also get a chance to explain Google Sky and Google Mars.

What follows is part of my article on Google Earth from 4 months ago.

If you have a chance, download Google Earth and check it out. Many of us did so when it first came out, but I can assure you it is much improved since its debut in 2004. Also check out an article in *The Franklin Press* about Jean Evans, who has made numerous contributions to the database: tinyurl.com/ne2xom.

When I first downloaded "Google Earth" 5.0, it was followed by a very quick installation and a whole list of tutorials. I spent the next 2 hours literally exploring my home planet. There was amazement at every click. I saw a night time torch light dive, by divers from the *Calypso* in the clear waters off the Azores; a stunning evening cruise down the Seine River with the Eiffel tower in the background; a skiing run in the Alps in 3D and in real time; a photo montage of the Queen Mary where she is permanently docked; And a fly through the Grand Canyon, where I was able to stop along the way to see uploaded photo albums taken by its many visitors.

Like most Google applications, it is intuitive; you can just open up the interface and explore. But after a while you realize there is so much more information available hidden



Franklin resident Jean G. Evans' photo, Raccoons on Hot Day June 5, 2008, is on Google Earth, where it has been viewed over 13,000 times!

behind all the buttons and icons. So I would advise taking advantage of the many tutorials available. I did spend quite a bit of time trying to master the "Flight Simulator," I must say with limited success. Perhaps if there had been a train simulator I would have done better.

With the Flight Simulator you can pick a plane and an airport to start from and take off into Google Earth. All the basic flight controls including a heads-up display are there. Distance measuring tools are available to calculate trip times, as well as terrain maps to determine realistic flight paths. For small plane pilots this would be an excellent way to plan a trip.

And planning trips is one of the main attractions of this program. If you are planning a vacation or a business trip to virtually any place on Earth, go here first. By turning on and off various layers of information, you can zero in on what you want to see or do. If this is a popular destination, there will be thousands of photos and YouTube videos available to show you the lay of the land before you ever set off for the airport.

There was a globe in my grade school classroom. You could tell the names of countries, major cities and rivers, and you could pick out the continents and the oceans; that was about it. In a wired classroom today, you have "database Earth" at your disposal. I checked—there are hundreds, if not thousands of lesson plans available that utilize Google Earth. The lessons are not limited to geography, there is science, culture, history and even math lessons that take advantage of the online data available through this resource. A teacher today has more information available and accessible in this one resource than was available even in the best school library just 10 years ago.

There is no way I can adequately cover the depth and variety of data and visuals available in this resource. Did I mention the thousands of web cams that are accessible, and the worldwide real-time weather that is available? There is a [Global Awareness](#) database that includes "Fair Trade" location, WWF projects, UNICEF water and sanitation sites, and many more. The oceans are covered in depth; including all known shipwrecks, fisheries information, ocean monitoring stations and Arctic sea ice information.

And just in case one planet is not enough, there is a Google Mars. Just like our home planet, data for Mars is available using the same interface tools. For the master minds at Google, the sky is not the limit. There is also an astronomy database. With this tool you can scan the known universe for images and data on objects visible in our sky.

Hope to see you at our next meeting on August 11th.

How Can I Access Windows Desktop Icons Without Minimizing All Open Apps?

by Gabe Goldberg, Computers and Publishing, Inc.

People's computer desktops vary as much as their physical desktops do. Some have just a few icons while others are crowded landscapes resembling a video game maze.

My PC desktop has the usual software icons plus various files and Web pages I've stashed there temporarily. If I accumulated files there I want to save, I'd never find anything in the clutter, so I tidy it every now and then.

In the meantime, I use Desktop icons to launch programs and open files, since I find that easier than navigating Start/All Programs to find the right folder, then carefully navigating to find the right program icon (since I'd hate to run an uninstaller when I meant to run a program!).

But even with Windows' Show Desktop button or a mouse button set to Minimize All, it would be tedious to keep viewing the Desktop to find Desktop icons. So I've enabled a standard Windows toolbar which gives me one-click access to everything on the Desktop *without* viewing the Desktop!

To do this, right-click in an empty part of the Taskbar, pick Toolbars, and click Desktop. The word "Desktop" will appear on the Taskbar, next to the symbol ">>." When you click >>, you'll get a vertical pop-up showing all Desktop icons—program, file, folder, etc. Click what you want and it will open, and the pop-up list will disappear.

So with minimal mouse movement and two clicks, you're running your app or looking at your file, and all your carefully arranged applications are just as you want them. If you select a folder

on the Desktop, you'll get a fly-out listing of files (or embedded folders) it contains. If the list won't fit within your screen height, you can scroll down (and up) with small black arrows at the list's top/bottom.

Note that unless you've tinkered with them, Desktop icons are arranged in two separate alphabetically arranged groups. The first group is items in the All Users Desktop folder; the second group is items in the Desktop folder for the user you're logged on as. If you're slightly compulsive, it's easy to open both folders in Windows Explorer and merge the lists. But it's equally easy to get used to the two separate lists, since—especially for launching programs—you'll likely click the same few icons most often.

If you like the Desktop toolbar, explore Windows' other standard-but-usually hidden toolbars: Address, Windows Media Player,

Links, and Language Bar. Quick-Launch is usually displayed. But enabling more than one or two of them may crowd the taskbar so badly that open program buttons are too small to be usable.

If that happens, uncheck Lock the Taskbar (you did notice that option after Right Clicking the Taskbar, didn't you?), grab the Taskbar's top edge (assuming the Taskbar is at screen bottom), and slowly lift it enough so that the Taskbar doubles in height. Lock it while you explore its new shape and components. And don't worry—everything you've done is easily reversed.

Editor's Tip: Once you've created a Desktop Toolbar, you can hide the icons on your desktop, leaving a clean, uncluttered desktop. In Windows XP, this is a simple, two-click procedure.

(see *Desktop* on page 9)

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Exploring Microsoft Windows 7 Beta 1, Part 2

What I've Discovered About Windows 7

by Lee Reynolds, a member of the Boca Raton Computer Society, FL, www.brcs.org

System Requirements

For those who are wondering, these are what Microsoft says are the system requirements for Windows 7:

- A 1 GHz or faster processor (for both the 32-bit and 64-bit versions)
- at least 1 GB RAM
- at least 16 GB available disk space to install the operating system
- A graphics adaptor that supports DX9 graphics with at least 128 MB of memory (in order for Aero to work)
- A DVD-R/W drive

Main Improvements

Windows 7 is essentially a much improved Windows Vista. It has these main improvements over Vista, among many others:

- easier home networking through a new facility called HomeGroups
- a much more capable Windows Backup tool
- a redesigned and more functional Taskbar
- a new concept for organizing files and folders called Libraries
- the ability to use Windows Instant Search over other PCs in a network
- improved support for multimedia using Windows Media Player and Windows Media Center
- a much friendlier version of Vista's User Account Control
- some new capabilities of the Aero interface, notably "Aero Peek," "Aero Shake" and "Aero Snap."

Main Features

Let's start taking a look at the Windows 7 Beta in an organized

travelog through all the main features, complete with screen captures. First, we take a look at the Desktop.

The Desktop

When you look at the Windows 7 Beta Desktop (*Figure 1*), you will not see many differences from Vista's. One difference you will see immediately is that there is a little message etched into the lower right hand corner of the screen reading: "Windows 7 For testing purposes only. Build 7000".

Also, there is a shortcut on the Windows 7 Desktop labeled "Send Feedback." This is your mechanism for telling Microsoft about what you like and dislike, what bugs you found, etc. It will only send the report to Microsoft if you have a Windows Live ID number. The facility for sending feedback is also present in every window you open, at the top right near the Minimize, Maximize and Close buttons.

As in Windows Vista, the Start button of Windows XP and previous versions of Windows has been replaced by a small round "orb," which only tells you it is related to "Start" if you hover the mouse over it for a second or two, and then a tool tip pops up briefly.

Notice that Microsoft decided to eliminate the famous Sidebar of Vista. You can still have "gadgets" located on your Desktop, but more about that later.

The Taskbar

Let's take a look at the new Windows 7 Taskbar (*Figure 2*). Note that the icons are a bit larger and therefore the Taskbar is wider than what you may be used to from previous versions of Windows.

You can adjust these smaller by using Taskbar Properties, but then you may lose some of the neat "Aero" effects. When you first install Windows 7, you see icons for

(see *Windows 7* on page 11)

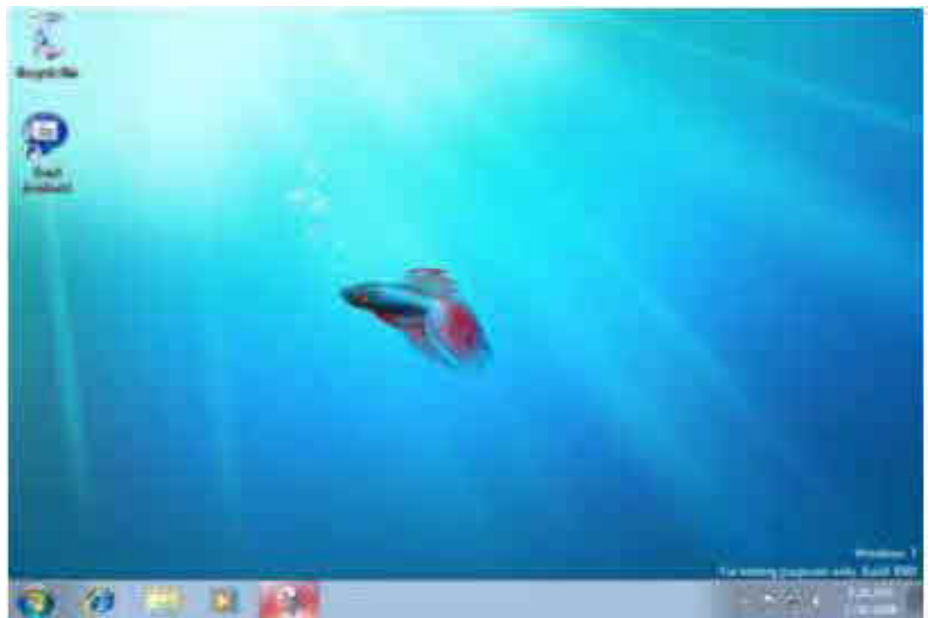


Figure 1 Windows 7 Desktop

Free Software Helps Caregivers

by Mike Morris, Editor, Front Range PC Users Group, Fort Collins, CO.
kByte™ Newsletter, June 2009, www.frpcug.org

An article with the title “Caring for the Caregiver” appeared in the November/December 2007 issue of AARP magazine¹. Here is an extract from that article:

“A cascade of studies in recent years has shown that caregivers stand at particular risk for a host of mental and physical illnesses, many of which have roots in stress, exhaustion, and self-neglect—symptoms some medical professionals have begun calling caregiver syndrome.... According to a 2004 national survey by AARP and The National Alliance for Caregiving, nearly 23 million households are currently home to a caregiver, most often a woman who is taking care of someone 50 or older. Some 43 percent of these caregivers are over 50 themselves—13 percent are over 65—and they spend good chunks of their weeks on a heady range of chores, from medication management and bathing to feeding, clothing, and arranging health care services.... Unfortunately for many friends and family members of caregivers, it is difficult to know when to step in—or what to do....”

I recommend this article to all caregivers, and to friends and family members of caregivers. Yes, it is difficult for friends and family members of caregivers to know what to do. It can also be overwhelming for a caregiver to add another task—coordinating help from those friends and family members—to an already burdensome schedule.

Both caregivers and those willing to help may find a scheduling solution with a website called LotsaHelping

Hands.com. This website allows a caregiver or family member to:

“Create a free of charge, private, web-based community to organize family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues—a family’s ‘circles of community’—during times of need....”

There are three primary templates:

1. Caregiving
2. Eldercare and Long Term Care
3. Military and Veterans Families

There are four additional templates:

1. Volunteering
2. Parenting
3. Schools
4. Religious Groups

These templates allow one person to coordinate the activities of others by identifying the needs and allowing volunteers to accept tasks. All of this activity takes place online, relieving the caregiver of the burden

of many phone calls and separate schedules. For those familiar with Google Documents™, there is a slight similarity between the two. However, the Lotsa Helping Hands templates are designed specifically for caregiving situations:

“Each community includes an intuitive group calendar for scheduling tasks such as meals delivery and rides, a platform for securely sharing vital medical, financial, and legal information with designated family members, and customizable sections for posting photos, well wishes, blogs, journals, and messages.

Now, when someone asks ‘what can I do to help?’ the answer is ‘give me your name and email address’—the system takes over and allows people to sign up and start helping.”

(see *Caregivers* on page 7)



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(Caregivers —continued from page 6)

A web-based service such as Lotsa Helping Hands is certain to generate questions about privacy and security. You will find answers to these questions in the “Terms of use” page of the website. Included in the Terms are descriptions of the data security, data integrity and access (among other) protections.

[Note: The scheduling features are not dependent upon the use of private information. It is not necessary to include medical, financial or legal information on the website—although that information is protected].

Lotsa Helping Hands has many non-profit partners, including the Alzheimer’s Association, the Family Caregiver Alliance, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and many more. Check the Partners page of the Lotsa Helping Hands website for more information.

You can read what national media, such as Business Week, NY Times and others have to say about Lotsa Helping Hands by clicking on the links on the Media page of the Lotsa Helping Hands website.

I have not personally used this service, although there was a time, not so long ago, when I would have used it had I known about it. After reading the description of the service, and the “How It Works” section of the website, I am convinced that the service is, indeed, very valuable and also secure. I recommend that caregivers try this service. There is at least the potential to reduce your levels of stress and exhaustion associated with your role of caregiver.

¹. Crute, Sherre, “Caring for the Caregiver.” AARP Magazine, November and December, 2007.

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The Deals Guy

by Bob Click,
Greater Orlando Computer Users Group



Worried About A Website’s Safety?

A popular warning product for dangerous websites is McAfee’s “Site Advisor,” www.siteadvisor.com. I’ve read a couple of reviews that were not all that complimentary, but have not tried it myself. Another one that I have not read about either way is Site Hound. These products warn you if a website is safe to visit. Site Hound is offered by Fire Trust, www.firetrust.com. There is a free version, and also a pay version with more features for \$29.95. They also offer MailWasher if you want spam protection, and it is a popular product with a one-time price. Do your homework if you are interested in either of these. User group member discounts are available for Fire Trust products through APCUG, www.apcug.net. Your user group must be a member to have access to the Sharepoint page for that information.

Ever Consider A Virtual Cover?

(This is their announcement, but edited) Insofta Development has unveiled the newest version of Cover Commander, a tool that lets you quickly and easily create quality custom-designed three-dimensional virtual boxes for software, e-books, DVDs, manuals, CD-ROMs and screenshots.

Enhancements in the latest version of include batch processing from the command line, for creating a large number of similar virtual boxes, books and many more. The program also allows saving animation in SWF, GIF and AVI formats. It creates sophisticated and modern cover designs with very few mouse clicks. It allows customization of background color and transparency, gradient, shadow, and reflection, and the settings can be saved and used later. Insofta Cover Commander is

compatible with Windows 98, ME, NT, 2000, XP and Vista, and costs \$48.30 for a single license with one year of free updates. Further information on the product and a free trial version, are available from www.insofta.com/cover-commander. User group members get a 20% discount with code ICC-RRDJ-DUG.

Problems?

A while back I mentioned the problem I had not being able to access the memory in my digital picture frame with either of my desktop machines, but I could with my new laptop. Nobody was able to tell me what was wrong, but Bob Balogh, past president of the Boca Raton Computer Society, www.brcs.org, sent me a suggestion for finding the answer, www.blackviper.com. I have not had the time to go there to research it yet, but hope to get it done soon. Here’s Bob’s suggestion:

“The above is one of the best sites available for learning about your computer. The section on Windows Configurations, left hand side, is most helpful.”

I always read Bob’s column in their newsletter, Boca Bits, and here is something he recommended. Bob likes to keep a monthly calendar on his desktop, to see the entire month at a glance. The one he suggests also has an array of other features that lets you enter events that are upcoming, etc. It is called Rainlendar Lite, and it’s free at www.snapfiles.com/get/Rainlendar.html.

That’s it for this month. I’ll have more new product announcements on my website (most not offering a discount). www.dealsguy.com. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, bobclick@bellsouth.net. Editor’s note: This column has been edited for space and content considerations.

The Emergency Tool In The Palm Of Your Hand: Your Mobile Phone

by Lorin Goldstein, member of The PC Users Group of Connecticut, www.tpcug.org

Your mobile phone can actually be a life saver or an emergency tool for survival. Check out what you can do with it:

Unlock Your Car From Miles Away

You've locked your keys in your car and you are at least an hour from your house. Does your car have remote keyless entry? Your cellphone will open your car for you.

You will still need someone at home to find your spare keys. The deal is they don't have to drive out to you if you have your cellphone handy. Call someone at home on their cellphone from your cellphone. Hold your cellphone about a foot from your car door and have the person at your home press the unlock button, holding it near the mobile phone on their end. Your car will unlock.

Distance is no object. You could be hundreds of miles away, and if you can reach someone who has the other remote for your car, you can unlock the doors (or the trunk).

Emergency 112

The Emergency Number worldwide (outside the US) for Mobile is 112. It will work even when you find yourself out of your mobile network's coverage area. Dial 112 in an emergency, and the mobile will search any existing network in your area to establish the emergency number for you. This number, 112, can be dialed even if the keypad is locked! I'd tell you to try it, but give the emergency operator a break and wait until you really need it to try the number.

Hidden Battery Power

Your cellphone holds a secret. You will only discover it when your cell

battery is very low. Press the keys *3370# to activate your cell's reserve battery power. Your cellphone will restart with the reserve and will show a 50% increase in battery. This reserve will get charged when you charge your cellphone next time.

Disable A Stolen Mobile Phone

Once again you left your cellphone behind. This time you don't have to worry that someone else is stealing all your data. That is if you move quick enough before they act.

You will need your cellphone's serial number to do this. To get your cellphone's serial number, key in the following digits on your phone: *#06#. A 15-digit code will appear on the screen. This number is unique to your handset. Write it down and keep it somewhere safe.

If your phone gets stolen, you can phone your service provider and give them this code. They will then be able to block your handset so even if the thief changes the SIM card, your phone will be totally useless. You probably won't get your phone back, but at least you know that whoever stole it can't use/sell it either. If everybody does this, there would be no point in people stealing mobile phones.

Free Directory Service For Cells

Have you used your cellphone to call 411 information for a telephone number? Like your local telephone company, cellphone companies charge \$1.00 to \$1.75 or more for 411 information. The trick is to not use your cellphone company's 411 service. When you need to use the 411 information option, simply dial one of the free 411 services instead.

Try any of these numbers and you won't be charged any fee:

(800) FREE411 or (800) 373-3411
Sponsored by McDonald's

(800) GOOG411 or (800) 466-4411
Sponsored by Google

You will have to listen to a quick ad and be prompted to dial for some service but the call is FREE. That is as long as you don't dial out to the advertised company after the short sales pitch. If you have free text messaging you can even get the number texted to you free. Otherwise text messaging fees from your provider will apply.

Don't leave all these numbers to memory. Save them to your cellphone and you'll have them handy when you need them.

So Many Tips So Little Value

If you have been trying these tips as you read them, you would know that for the most part, they are not true. That is because they are from an email I have repeatedly received from friends and family. The email is a bunch of junk (mostly) and possibly contained a virus or spyware at some time (my IT person/geek—otherwise known as my husband) has my computer with all sorts of virus protection and anti-spyware to protect my computer so the information may have been pulled and forwarded in a clean email but it is still mostly junk.

A good parameter to follow with deciding whether to forward email you receive is if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is not true. In which case, the best way of stopping the email is not forwarding it on again.

(see *Cellphone* on page 9)

(Cellphone—continued from page 8)

If you are not sure about something you received, you can always check at www.snopes.com. You can also Google the topic and will probably come up with a bunch of sites that will help. This email I found at urbanlegends.about.com/od/business/a/cellphone_tips.htm. I don't normally read these websites (who has the time) but I do check out the things I receive before I become part of the junk and spam mail problem.

For Those Who Have Not Checked Yet

1. Unlocking your car: False—

Cellphones and car key remote locks work on different frequencies.

2. Emergency 112: Mostly False—

It works pretty much only in Europe. Stay with 911 here.

3. Hidden Battery Power: False—

For some Nokia phones this code will enhance voice quality, but at the cost of battery power loss.

4. Disable stolen cell: Not Always & Why Bother—

On some phones this will cause your account information to be displayed but your provider already has this information. Just call them tell them the phone was stolen.

5. FREE411 True—The only part that may not be true is that McDonald's may not be the sponsor when you call. The sponsor varies regularly and so far I do not recall having McDonald's as a sponsor when I have used it.

So the next time you feel the need to send on your words of wisdom, be sure they ring true.

Happy emailing. If you have not figured it out yet, the real title for this article is: *Email Awareness*

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Tech Talk— Electronic Armageddon

by Lizz Russell

If there is a large solar flare from our sun or a hostile enemy detonates a High-Altitude Electromagnetic Pulse (HEMP) weapon, much of our power grid and anything electronic would be destroyed and unusable until the damaged electronic components are replaced. Estimates are that it could take as long as 3 years to replace major power grid components from either event. To read more, go to www.sciencenews.org and do a search for *electric grid*. (tinyurl.com/mwtnkn.)

How would you live if you did not have electricity or computers? Do you have a Plan B?

What would you lose if you had to go without electricity or computers? Would you be able to function? Even our phones, TVs and automobiles would be crippled. Do you have a hand-pump for water? Do you have a way to heat your place? How would you get around? How would you eat? What would you eat? What about all your photos? Do you still have a paper copy or are they only electronic? If you had a business, would you still be able to serve your customers?

(Desktop—continued from page 4)

- Right-click on the desktop and open the "Arrange Icons By" sub-menu.
- In the sub-menu, click "Show Desktop Icons" to uncheck it.

The icons should disappear, leaving your favorite desktop photo fully visible. To show desktop icons again, repeat the above procedure.

While either of these things will probably never happen, the possibility should be considered. The weapons exist in abundance and our sun has been the source of solar flares over the course of history.

I suggest that you take a little time to think about and plan for how you would live if such an event ever does occur. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

There's lots of reading available on these topics. Try them out in your favorite search engine.

Important Email Warning

If you receive an email from the Department of Health telling you not to eat canned/tinned pork because of swine flu...

Ignore it.

It's just Spam.



Lizz Russell runs a local computer services and repair business. Call her at (828) 342-0782 to arrange a house call to your home or business.

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Word Processing Choices from AZ (really) Part I: From A to N

by John White, a member of the ICON PCUG, NY, from The ICON Graphic.
Newsletter of ICON PC User Group, Inc., November 2008. www.iconpcug.org

Besides the venerable Microsoft Word and WordPerfect, an array of word-processing applications—both cheap and free—is vast and growing rapidly. Some are freestanding singletons to install on the hard disk. Some serve in a suite of apps including a spreadsheet to run live via the Internet. Most online versions I viewed still manifest hurdles to leap before they reach maturity. Two installable versions of MS-Office alternatives, however, rival the Gates products in impressive ways.

Abiword: Although Microsoft's "Wordpad" performs at least half of the writing tasks most of us do, Abiword is installed on my four Windows computers. It will do 98% of what I ask of a word wrangler. Placing a tiny icon on the Quick Launch menu just to the right of the Start button provides this fast-loading, capable program in easy reach. The native file format, .abw, works equally in Abi's versions for Linux and Mac OS X, but there is also an easy drop-down option to save in .doc, .rtf, .txt, .html, .xhtml, and other formats. Abi is a favorite alternate of some of ICON's leaders. Free download: www.abiword.com. The latest version is 2.6.2.

Buzzword: Adobe's offering, self-described as "The First Real Word Processor for the Web" even though it's not, requires a sign-up and password and says "We're sorry, JavaScript must be enabled in order to use Buzzword." I'm sorry, too. If a program requires JavaScript, ActiveX, Flash or Internet Explorer, I can live without it. The world is dangerous enough without them, and my life is already too exciting. Ah, so little time and so many other

choices! If someone is willing to deal with it, please try it and give us your reaction to Buzzword. Free download required: www.buzzword.com.

Flysuite: This one promotes itself as an online alternative to Word and Excel that focuses on document collaboration. When I went to their website, my Comodo firewall filled the lower right quarter of the screen with warnings about "blocked URLs," an all time record. That sounded too much like an attack of potential bad guys and I stopped right there. Any braver soul care to report on Flysuite? Free: www.flysuite.com.

Google Docs beta: A new offline version exists, but in an even earlier beta stage. Despite my awe for the quality and variety of many offerings from Google, Docs beta online doesn't make the list. It seems to drive a middle lane between "lightweight" and "lame." I see no reason to use it yet instead of Abiword or even Wordpad to create a new file. Any other users care to point out advantages too subtle for me to spot?

To get there, enter your Gmail account name and password. Click on New>Document (or spreadsheet, presentation, or folder) and go to work. Don't look for rulers, tabs, or clues about WordArt, mail merge or even clues how to send the document as an email or attachment. A limited selection of insertable "special characters" offers barebones Wingdings but not Monotype Sorts or any other favorite character sources. You can insert other special characters if you know their Unicode numbers. Oddly enough, the insertable "Asian" character set includes angle brackets,

printer dingbats, Western math symbols, plus cm, kg, km, and copy-right (c). You may still have to wangle an "invitation" to Gmail if Google is still playing hard-to get with this powerful email/storage service. Free: docs.google.com.

Microsoft Works: Older versions required hop-skip-and-jump trips through menus to reach an otherwise inviting word processor with usable templates for home and school use. Works 8.5 came on my laptop a year ago, but some Vista machines reportedly include version 9 of Works employing a full version of MSWord, although the Microsoft website was somewhat vague about this. Version 8.5's word processor looks like Word Lite. It includes the ability to open its own .wps format and its .wpt templates (nice) as well as Word and other formats such as .rtf, .txt, .csv, and .html. Forget about .xml, .odf, or MS-Office 2007's own .docx. Works offers a friendly and capable database, a spreadsheet, calendar, and dictionary as well. Version 8.5 is under \$10 at store.purplus.net/miwo85.html.

Mindomo: As a preliminary for individual or group writing, this program calling itself an "Online Mind Mapping Process" offers a free visual organizer to clarify and plan the writing process. Your turn: www.mindomo.com.

About John White: John has taught word processing and spreadsheets for a dozen years at New Horizons (Manhattan), Dowling College, NY Tech, and BOCES. This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author at editor (at) iconpcug.org.

(Windows 7—continued from page 5)

Internet Explorer, Windows Explorer and Windows Media Player. This is similar to what was present on what was called the “Quick Launch Toolbar” in earlier Windows.

There’s a line at the right end of this group of icons separating them from the Taskbar proper. Does this mean the Quick Launch Toolbar is now gone in Windows 7? Yes, it does. The entire Taskbar in Windows 7 is now a mixture of pseudo Quick Launch

icons and the ordinary buttons present for running programs. You can distinguish a button on the new Taskbar as being one for a running program by the fact that the button appears to have a square surrounding the icon. (Thus, the rightmost icon in *Figure 2*, which is for the built-in Snipping Tool, has a square around it because the program is running—that was what I used to take the screenshot.)

Also, if the button is a pseudo Quick Launch button, then you can right

click it and select *Unpin from Taskbar* on the context menu to remove it. *Figure 3* shows this right click menu for the Windows Explorer icon.

If you right-click one of the pseudo Quick Launch icons on the Taskbar, you get what is called a “Jump Menu.” *Figure 4* shows a Jump Menu for Windows Media Player. All of the icons are moveable on the Taskbar. Just click and drag any icon left or right anywhere you want.

Figure 5 shows the “Notification Area” of the Windows 7 Taskbar. (This is what was called the “System Tray” prior to Windows XP.) Notice that there are only a few icons present in the Windows 7 Notification Area. One is normally the “Action Center” icon, which will notify you of important actions you need to take, like downloading a Windows update or turning on the Windows Firewall. All of the Notification Area icons can be individually adjusted to determine whether or not they appear there and whether or not notification messages will be displayed.

If there are hidden icons in the Notification Area, you will see a little upward pointing arrow on the left which when clicked gives you a display of the ones not shown. Notice that now the Taskbar is wide enough to show the date as well as the time at the right end in the Notification Area.

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Figure 2 Windows 7 Taskbar



Figure 3 Windows 7 Unpin



Figure 4 Windows 7 Jump Menu

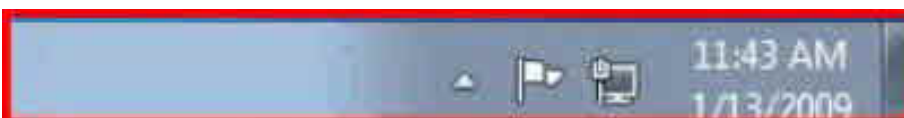


Figure 5 Windows 7 Notification Area

Directory Updates

See the printed edition.

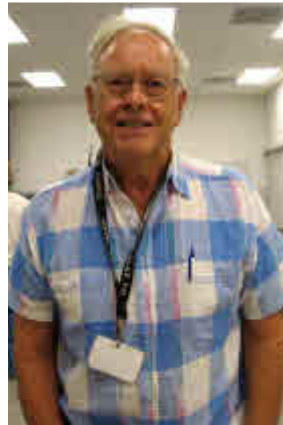
Macon Users Group

Affix
First Class
Postage

FIRST CLASS • DATED MATERIAL



July's Door Prize Winners



Jo Davis
won
July's 50-50
jackpot!

