Medical Office Systems, LLC

Newsletter – February 2018
January 14, 2020 – The (Windows 7) Clock Is Ticking

Usually we associate ticking clocks with something nefarious – in the movies the ticking clock is accompanied by the hero or heroine feverishly dismantling a time bomb with seconds to go. The message for today is not as urgent… yet. It will become more urgent as time passes, so consider this an "early warning".

January 14, 2020 may seem like a long ways away, but everyone using Microsoft Windows 7 will need to keep that date in mind and begin planning for computer upgrades. January 14, 2020 is the last day that Windows 7 will exist as a supported, active operating system. Does that mean it will stop working? No, it will continue to operate just fine. But as an extinct operating system on January 15, 2020, it means a lot if you must comply with any industry, federal, or state regulations. And if you are a home user, you may not want to use Windows 7 for other reasons as detailed below:

For Business Users Only: Many government regulations and/or industry security guidelines require that electronic transactions be carried out on computers and software that is currently supported and considered "Active". Retired and obsoleted computers or software that cannot meet the security guidelines are not in compliance, and therefore cannot be used. One such regulation in the healthcare industry is "HIPAA", and one example from the business world is the credit card industry compliance code named "PCI". If your business must comply with any of these regulations or industry standards, you must upgrade.

For Home and Business Users: Home users are not off the hook – there are other reasons why you might need to upgrade. Major software publishers will stop making software for unsupported operating systems. Windows XP, Windows Vista, and those using older Mac OS versions have already encountered the little yellow pop-up boxes in the Chrome browser that announce: "you are running an unsupported operating system" or similar message. When you go to upgrade Chrome, you get the message that no new version is available. The same holds true for other software: you cannot run Office2016 on anything older than Windows7, and the new Office2019, when released, will not work on Windows 7 or Windows 8 - only Windows 10 or higher.

Apple /Mac Users are not exempt: I cannot give definite dates, because Apple is notorious for not releasing "end of life" schedules when products go off support. The best guideline I can give is that Apple uses an "N - 2" philosophy: the current version of their OS, plus 2 versions prior are considered "current". For example, MacOS-X versions Yosemite and prior are considered obsolete, despite one last update to Yosemite in July 2017.

The overall message is that software makers and, to a lesser extent, hardware makers, are no longer willing to support older versions of their products forever. Some may say it is deliberate obsolescence, but the larger perspective is that the computer business must move rapidly because the threat of security breaches is so high, and older software cannot be "fixed" or "patched" any longer. Many new software products have been re-written from the ground up to incorporate better security, rather than adding security "band-aids" afterwards.

-John Becker