

December 2005 Newsletter

With the holidays here, many of you may be giving or receiving a new computer or other high-tech gadget. As convenient as these devices may be, there are several technical issues as well as hidden costs that you need to keep in mind. That \$499 deal you thought you got on a new computer could cost you an addition \$200 or more if you are not careful. If you currently have a wireless computer network or are planning to install one in the near future, you may want to read this.

INTERFERENCE WITH WIRELESS NETWORKS?

Those of you who connect to the internet through a wireless network know how fantastic it can be to be able to move around the house or yard and still get your email. With the ever increasing number of wireless products out there, you need to be careful to avoid products that operate on the same frequency. It is not to say that you can not get them to all work together, but sometimes it takes some educated tweaking.

What Products Could Interfere With Your Network?

Most wireless networks operate on a radio frequency of 2.4 Ghz but there are a few systems that use 5.8 Ghz. If any of the following household items are using the same frequency, then you could have a problem: Cordless Telephones - Microwave Ovens - Wireless Weather Stations - Wireless Speakers - Wireless Video/TV Transmitters - Wireless Security Systems - Wireless Intercoms - Wireless Controllers - The New X-Box 360 - Wireless Baby Monitors.

Common Symptoms of Interference

- Poor or reduced wireless range
- Frequent loss of connection
- Cannot connect even with good signal strength
- Lost connection when answering the phone
- Static on cordless phones

2.4Ghz



CAUTION!

Cordless Phones are the most common Problem

The most common source of interference is from cordless telephones (Not Cell Phones). Many of the standard cordless phones now use the 2.4 Ghz band and can greatly effect your wireless network, especially if the phones base station is located in close proximity to the wireless network. Fortunately, there is a solution, cordless phones come in several frequency ranges, so you can pick from 900Mhz, 2.4Ghz and 5.8Ghz. The 900Mhz phones are the older type so I would suggest using the newer 5.8Ghz phones if you have a standard 2.4Ghz wireless network.

Hidden Costs \$\$\$ of a New Computer

Although the cost of computers has come down, don't be fooled by the advertised price. There are usually hidden costs that come up after the purchase. Most computers now come with tons of trial software that is only usable for a period of 20, 60 or 90 days and must be purchased to continue usage. This includes the often needed software such as Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook) and critical security software like Norton or McAfee antivirus. If you don't pay for these after the trial period, they will stop functioning and this can leave your computer open to viruses and other potential

problems. You should expect to pay an additional \$200 or more for these products. As I have mentioned in the past, there are many free alternatives that can be downloaded, but you must uninstall the trial versions first.

Upgrading Your Computer Can Save you Money!

As the price of electricity rises every year, so does the cost to operate your computer. Did you know that the typical home computer system can cost you anywhere from \$50 to \$400 per year to run depending on whether or not you leave it on and the type of system you have. Many of the newer systems, besides being faster and offering new capabilities, can be more energy efficient. For example a New Flat LCD monitor consumes about half the energy of an older CRT monitor and unlike the LCD's, the CRT can also draw power even when it is turned off. Just like many television sets, the instant on feature keeps the picture tube warm to reduce the turn on time, thus drawing power all the time. To give you an idea of what the cost can be, let me give you some energy costs for common items: *Keep in mind that I figured the consumption based on this equipment being on 24 hours a day and at my current electricity rate of about 14.4 cents per KWH.*

Desktop Computer (just the box) - \$112 per year

Laptop Computer - \$35 per year

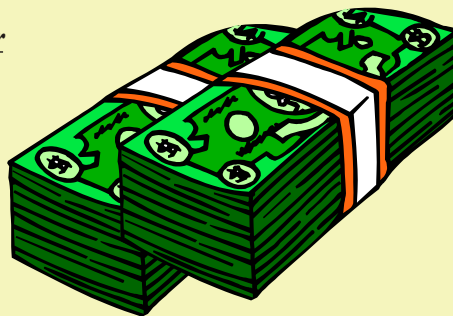
Older 17" CRT Monitor - \$104 per year

New LCD monitor - \$54 per year

All-In-One Injet printer - \$25 per year

Cable Modem or Router - \$5 per year

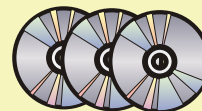
60 Watt Light Bulb - \$75.66 per year



WINDOWS TIP OF THE MONTH!

You Don't Need To Buy a New Computer Just To Cut Costs. You can always just turn it off or better still, Windows has several settings that can be adjusted to help reduce the power consumption of both your computer and monitor.

To access the power settings click on **START>CONTROL PANEL>POWER OPTIONS**. You will see settings for when to turn off the monitor, hard disk and when the computer will go into System Standby mode. Depending on whether or not you have a laptop or a desktop, you may also have a separate set of options for running on batteries. The quicker your computer goes into standby mode or turns off the monitor and hard drive, the more energy you will save. All of these settings apply to the period of time after you stop typing or working on your computer.



ORDER RESTORE CD'S WITH YOUR NEW COMPUTER?

Restore CD's - Many computer manufacturers are not providing Restoration or Recovery Cd's with their computers anymore. They are including a recovery partition on the hard drive, which when accessed will restore your computer to its original factory state. This is fine for recovering from a virus or some software related problem. However, this can be a real problem when you have a hard drive failure. Some manufactures will supply CD's for free on request and others may charge about \$20-\$30. If the model you are purchasing does not come with original CD's then make sure that you can order them and do so before they become obsolete. Don't wait until you need them.

MULTI-MEDIA COMPUTER MAY NOT BE THE RIGHT CHOICE

Multi-Media PC's - Many PC's are now multi-media computers, meaning that they have all kinds of extra hardware and software to provide functions such as TV, Radio and Video Recording. If you don't have a specific need for these features, then stay away from these models. They can be very problematic and slow due to all the installed extras. If you have one of these models, you may want to uninstall many of the applications that you are not using.

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