

Computer Hysteria: Crash!

by Berry F. Phillips, Member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City and a regular writer for the CCOKC website and the eMonitor

Crash strikes terror in the hearts of computer users. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project approximately two thirds of Americans use the Internet and about 87% of them through connections in their homes. While there is no research data on the number of computer users that cannot master their computers, there is evidence of anger and frustration with computers that could escalate into what one psychologist calls "computer rage."

University of Maryland Professor Kent Norman says, "Men and women are taking out their frustrations on the computer and unfortunately, sometimes misdirecting it to other people." Norman, who directs the Laboratory of Automation Psychology and Decision Processes at the University, conducted an online survey where twenty percent of the respondents admitted they dropped a computer on the floor out of anger. They described smashing, microwaving, and cursing their computers. One claimed he threw his laptop in a fryer and several claimed to have shot hardware. The study further suggested computer users were most annoyed by: e-mail snafus including spam, waiting while a computer completed a simple task, having to redo something because of a glitch and having to upgrade obsolete programs. Microsoft ranked high on the list of objects of ire. With the increased popularity of wireless networks, DVD players, and game systems, the possibilities of irritations are almost endless.

You can lower your cyber blood pressure by taking some preventative medicine. Increase your knowledge to make yourself a more-informed user. Join the Computer Club of Oklahoma City and network with other computer users and learn from their experiences (misery loves company!). Do NOT go on the Internet without a regularly updated and weekly-maintained complete computer security system including antivirus, anti-spyware and firewall software. (Not having the money for commercial applications is no excuse as there are several excellent freeware security software programs available online. Often forgotten is a good registry and unnecessary-file cleaner that has automatic backups, which can substantially reduce your crashes. Defrag weekly if needed and scandisk at least once a month. Do not forget to make an emergency boot disk.

Finally, in case of a crash, do not panic. Write down what you did immediately prior to the crash, and any instructions you receive from your computer. Make sure you have been taking fruit to lay at the feet of your computer guru or lay money on your friendly computer tech. The life you save may be your own computer. SOS stands for Save Our System!

MORE TECH NEWS from Sue Crane

Longhorn to Support Handwriting and Touch Screens

Microsoft plans to include touch screen functionality as a feature of the operating system in the next version of Windows, code-named Longhorn, in addition to support for pen-based input that Microsoft currently offers in Windows XP Tablet PC Edition. Longhorn will also include a new document format that rivals Adobe's PostScript and PDF.

3D Without Glasses

Toshiba plans to bring color 3D displays to video game arcades late next year -- and there'll be no need to don special goggles. The company will market the wide-angle 3D displays for video arcades in the second half of 2006, and extend the technology to applications including family TVs by 2010.