

THE COMPUTER CORNER

No. 220: US CERT; Geek Uninstaller

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I have touched on US CERT before, but it really deserves more. The abbreviation stands for the United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team, located within the National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center (NCCIC). It puts out a US-CERT Cyber Security Bulletin each week listing new vulnerabilities listed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) recorded in the National Vulnerability Database (NVD). The Department of Homeland Security sponsors the NVD. Now, that is really a lot of governmental alphabet soup! But it does provide a heads-up for software vulnerabilities, which we should pay attention to.

The bulletin lists three divisions: high, medium and low vulnerabilities. I found the 9 May issue of the bulletin (you can subscribe or read a single issue at www.us-cert.gov) quite interesting in the distribution of vulnerabilities. Here is a tabulation of just the high vulnerabilities for that week:

Adobe Acrobat	92 (50%)
Adobe Flash Player	25 (14%)
MS Office and Windows	26 (14%)
Google	25 (14%)
Linux	3 (2%)
Other	12 (7%)

The point is that Adobe products account for almost 65% of all high vulnerabilities for the week. Read that as: use of Adobe products is dangerous to the health of your computer because it opens vulnerability from viruses and other malware. So, I say it again: don't allow Adobe products on your machine until their corporate policies allow a great reduction in danger to your machine. When that happens, you can see it on the US-CERT website by following vulnerabilities, or I will be more than happy to report the increased safety.

I like to report on nifty new software that does its job well. Geek Uninstaller is one of those. Blazingly fast compared with the uninstall software utility built into Windows, it makes getting rid of installed stuff a pleasure. It does a rapid, deep, fast scanning to find all pieces of a program that are commonly left behind. It will even force programs to uninstall when they don't want to. Oh yes, did I mention it is free? Also note it is relatively tiny – only 2.46 Mb for the installer. Get it at Majorgeeks.com (no corporate relation to the Geek Uninstaller program). On the left Majorgeeks.com info bar, find System Tools, Uninstallers, and the latest version will be listed there. There are a lot of uninstall programs, but this one has wormed its way into my heart as a favorite. Try it.

Field Day is coming! Somehow, somewhere, participate in this worthy ham activity.

Happy, Safe and Smart Computing!