

An introduction to what the Windows XP shutdown means to you.

In the world of technology, 3 years is a lifetime, 5 years is a millennia, and 10 years is an eternity. So, what does that mean for Windows XP, released almost 13 years ago? It means that Microsoft is finally ready to pull the plug on their oldest still-supported operating system, and you need to be prepared for what it means to you.

1. XP will still work, but Caveat Emptor

On April 8, 2014, Microsoft will cease to support Windows XP. This doesn't mean that your computer will stop booting up. It will still work, still run, and still be usable. However, Microsoft will stop updating the software, so any new vulnerability that are found will not be patched and your system will be exposed. Additionally, even if you have an active Microsoft support contract, Microsoft will not help you with any issues related to XP. Finally, less and less programs will support XP, Procede's Excede included. All future versions of Excede DMS will NOT run on Windows XP.

2. Microsoft wants you to buy Windows 8, but Windows 7 is ok

Microsoft, in an effort to bolster their adoption numbers for Windows 8, would love for you to upgrade all the way to their latest OS. However, this isn't the right choice for everyone. You can still purchase licenses for Windows 7, and while both Windows 7 and Windows 8 require the same 1-GHz CPU, 1GB of RAM, and 16GB of HD space, Windows 7 is less taxing on the video card, so older machines will more easily support it. With that said, Microsoft could stop selling Windows 7 licenses at any time, so it is a good idea to purchase sooner, rather than later. As long as your computer is less than 5 years old, there's a good chance that you will be able to support Windows 7.

3. Plan for your upgrade, it takes a fresh install

One of the biggest issues that IT departments will run into while migrating from Windows XP to Windows 7 or Windows 8, is the lack of an upgrade option. Windows 7 and Windows 8 use a different file system for storing your data on the hard drive, and therefore, they require a fresh install of the operating system. This means that you won't be able to save any of the programs or settings that are installed on the computer; you will need to reinstall them after the upgrade. The good news, however, is that Windows 7 and 8 have much better driver support, so you are less likely to have to go searching for old hardware drivers.

4. Take advantage of the files and settings transfer wizard

Both Windows 7 and Windows 8 include a "files and settings transfer wizard" as part of the operating system and everyone should take advantage of it. Microsoft allows you to download a file from their website and run it on your XP machine. You can select the location and types of files that you want to save, and the wizard will save them to an external hard drive for you. Then, after you install Windows 7 or 8, you can re-import the files to your new installation. It won't transfer programs, but it will make sure you don't lose important documents, internet favorites, or program shortcuts. One note of caution: the transfer wizard is different in Windows 7 vs Windows 8, so make sure you download the correct version to run on your XP machine.

5. Office 2003 and Exchange 2003 are being sunset also

Microsoft is ending support of Office 2003 and Exchange 2003 on April 8th, as well. Both of these programs will still install properly and run on Windows 7 or Windows 8, however, just like XP, they will lose all security updates and support. This is slightly less critical than XP support ending, as Microsoft releases patches for Office less frequently; however, this is not an item to ignore. The easiest solution, of course, is to upgrade to the latest version of Office. But, IT departments should take a look at Microsoft's new Office 365 hosted solution.

6. Windows 7 has Windows XP mode - don't use it

Windows 7 Enterprise, Professional, and Ultimate editions include a setting called Windows XP mode. It runs a native version of Windows XP in a window within Windows 7. This is not a solution for people who upgrade to Windows 7 but still want to run Windows XP programs, as Microsoft is stopping support for this feature on April 8th as well. This means that if you run Windows XP mode on your Windows 7 machine, you are just as vulnerable as if you were using Windows XP for everything.

7. Microsoft has a tool to help with Windows XP program issues

There is no guarantee that all Windows XP apps will run on Windows 7 or Windows 8, but Microsoft has built in a tool to help solve any issues you encounter. If you are having a problem with an application that you have installed, right click on the desktop/start menu icon and then select "Troubleshoot Compatibility." The Program Compatibility Troubleshooter will take you through a step-by-step process of applying special settings to that application in an effort to fix your issues.

8. Help for smaller guys

Large organizations usually have the staff and resources to manage a large-scale roll out of a new operating system, but smaller organizations might not. Microsoft has published a help site with tutorials and migration guides at <http://smallbusiness.support.microsoft.com/en-US/gp/windows-xp-upgrade>. Always remember, Procede's professional services can help you as well.

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