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Blue Water News

APRIL 2009

Cleaning your computer

Preventive Maintenance Schedules

Checking your memory

NOW OFFERING

Excel, Access, Fox-pro, and Progress database development

CUSTOMER OF THE MONTH

Will Lambers, Apex Adjusting

Spring is here!

Spring is upon us. Flowers are blooming. Tax day is gone. It's that time of year when we get out our brooms and mops and cleanup the dust that has accumulated throughout the winter.

It's springtime! God let a breath of fresh air come through the door this morning as my husband was going out. Although it had a chill in it, there's a difference—it's not the chill of wintertime.

There are several things you should check now that spring is here ...

SURGE SUPPRESSOR

Along with spring comes thunderstorms. You'll want to make sure that you have adequate protection for your computer equipment.

There are several different types of surge suppressors on the market—if you go to buy one, make sure that you get a device with surge suppression—not one of those six port extension cords.

A good surge suppressor will have ports for not only your electrical devices but will also have ports for your telephone and network cables as well.

Some of them come with a \$15000 or \$25000 equipment protection warranty; I don't know anybody who has ever claimed that—but it might make you feel good.

Brand Name? I like the APC brand. Probably only because that's what we've historically used in the world that I came from. They were the first I think; maybe not.

I've got surge suppressors on everything in my house; some of them are APC and some are not. They work. That's what I care about.

OPEN WINDOWS

We all want to open the window and let that fresh air in. We need to remember to move our electrical stuff away from the open window. Water and electricity don't mix. That's simple.

DIRT

We all know that dirt accumulates through the winter. It's got no where to go.

Not only does it accumulate throughout your house, it also gets sucked into your computer.

If you have a desktop, it's relatively easy to clean the interior of the computer. There are usually 4-6 screws on the back of the thing that let you take the case off.

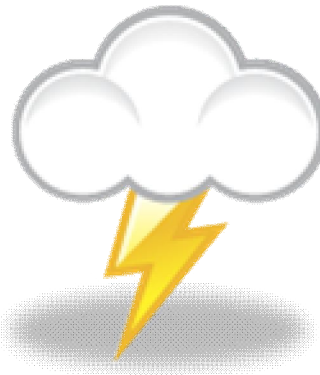
Just take the case off and use compressed air to blow the dust out. Or use a vacuum to suck the dust out.

You can also use a vacuum to suck the dirt out of your keyboard.

Whether you use compressed air or a vacuum, there are a couple of things you need to be aware of and take caution to.

VACUUM CLEANER

Vacuum cleaners generate static electricity when you turn them on. Although you can use it to suck the dirt out of a computer (I use mine to clean the crap out of my keyboard), you want to *make sure that you don't turn the vacuum on in close proximity to the computer.*



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If you do get struck by lightning, repair or replacement of your computer might be covered under your homeowner's policy. If so, they will require that you get an estimate. Call us and we'll put the estimate together. (This is a billable charge—refunded if we get the job to repair or replace your computer).

Did you know?

Spring is here

(Continued from page 1)

This is especially true if you have a desktop computer and it sits on the floor or close to the floor in a carpeted room.

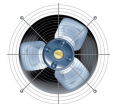
When you are inside the computer with the vacuum—be careful to not knock any parts loose!



COMPRESSED AIR

If you are using compressed air to clean the dirt out of your computer, **DO NOT blow it directly into the fans and power supplies** of the computer. Blowing air INTO these devices will cause these to fail.

WHILE YOU HAVE THE CASE OPEN



Take a quick peek to make sure your fans are working.

The fans inside your computer do the job of keeping the computer cool. These things get hot. Heat causes the electrical components to fail.

If you've got one that's not working, get it fixed. They don't cost much.

CLEANING DIRT OUT OF A LAPTOP

Bring it in. It's not something you want to take apart yourself.

The Spring Cleaning procedures mentioned here are a small part of our **42 point** PC Preventive Maintenance Schedule.

If you are not setup on a regular maintenance schedule, give us a call to talk about getting started.

The preventive maintenance schedule is a proactive event aimed at the prevention of breakdown and failures, increasing uptime, the effective service life of components, and optimizing performance. The intent is to keep your computer clean, running in top form, and attempt to head off issues at the pass. Components included in the preventive maintenance schedule are those which commonly fail or eventually wear out. Additional consideration has been made for those items that might result in downtime, a loss of data, or loss of production.

Maintenance consists of an initial evaluation of the environment the machine is used in followed by ongoing scheduled maintenance at the frequency you choose (minimum 3 times per year).

The way that it works is that we schedule you for these maintenance events and call to remind you when your machine is due for maintenance. We (optionally) setup remote access to your system so that the majority of it can be done over the internet. You pay us a fixed predetermined price for the service. Payment can be made upfront, at the time of service, or we will invoice you.

Of course, you can carry your machine into the office and get the same service—but we bill you for the time actually spent working on your machine and you will fall into queue behind whatever we currently have in the works.

This is a PC Maintenance Schedule intended for residential clients using standalone machines only—it does not include servers or machines used in a business environment. If you are a business client with several machines, the maintenance schedule will be modified for your specific situation.

The maintenance schedule does NOT include the resolution of any issues found during maintenance; including the cleanup of viruses, malware, etc. Likewise, any repairs necessary are beyond the scope of the preventive maintenance agreement. Repair and resolution of issues will be an additional charge at standard hourly rates.

How's your memory?

Here's a little memory test for everyone...

Most people know that you can right-click on the MY COMPUTER icon, choose PROPERTIES from the menu displayed, and see how much memory is in your computer.

But there is another way—and the other way will give you a little better idea whether or not you have *enough* memory.

Even if you're not a computer whiz you can do this.

Click **START → RUN**

(Normally in the lower left-hand corner of your screen).

Type in **msinfo32**

Click **OK**

(This opens up the SYSTEM INFORMATION utility installed on every Windows computer; the system summary shows you all kinds of things about your computer)

In the right hand window pane, scroll to the bottom until you see **TOTAL PHYSICAL MEMORY.**

This tells you how much memory you have installed.

It will probably say something like

"1024.00" MB or "2048.00" MB or "1.0GB" or "2.0GB" (MB = Megabytes; GB=Gigabytes).

1GB is the minimum that you should have installed. 2GB or 3GB might be better depending on what you do with your computer; but you should have at least 1GB. Windows uses about 400MB (40%) - leaving about 600MB for your programs. If you are running a memory hog antivirus program (you are running an antivirus program aren't you?), it may use 100-200MB more.

Now here's the more important part ...

Look below the total physical memory at the **AVAILABLE PHYSICAL MEMORY.**

If this number is above 300MB (or .3GB) you are probably doing okay. If it's above 1GB (or 1000MB) you have plenty of memory to do almost anything you want to do.

But if this number is BELOW 300MB (.3GB) you have a problem.

If it is below 200MB (.2GB) you probably experience some pretty severe computer slowdowns.

If it is below 100MB (.1GB) the computer is all but unusable and

you are frustrated with it. The computer is crawling. You think it's broken. It chinks away, takes forever to do anything, and sometimes gets confused.

Good news! Your computer is not broken. It's just overloaded. It doesn't have the resources to handle what you are asking it to do.

So how to fix that?

Upgrade the ram. If you have 1GB or less, add at least 1GB (if it will hold it).

If you don't want to upgrade the ram then just run one program at a time and you may be okay.

The thing to remember is that windows—all by itself with nothing else running—uses about 1/3 of the memory you physically have installed. If you're running Vista, it uses more than that.



100 Bytes = 1 kilobyte

100 Kilobytes = 1 megabyte

100 megabytes = 1 gigabyte

100 gigabytes = 1 terabyte

Excel? Access? Foxpro? Progress? Data conversion from one to the other?

Dorian comes to us from Grand Rapids Community College where he held the position of Student Records Technician. With several degrees and experienced in MS-Access, MS-Foxpro, and Progress database development—as well as MS-Office—Dorian will be providing assistance to our clients who have the need for custom report writing, macro creation, database development, or simply learning how to use these applications.



Utilize Dorian's expertise now through the month of May at 50% off our standard rate.

Offer expires 05/31/2009.

***** SPECIAL RATE *****

One MS-Access form and report—up to 10 hours of development—for the low price of \$500.



Dorian Chalom
Programmer/Analyst



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SERVICES WE OFFER:

- IT Consulting
- Network Design, Repair, & Security
- Disaster Recovery and Backup Solutions
- Data Recovery
- Virus/Spyware Protection and Removal
- PC Maintenance & Support
- Server Maintenance & Support
- Web Design
- Email & Internet solutions
- Helpdesk Support
- Storage Solutions
- Preventive Maintenance Schedules
- Database Design & Development
- Database Administration

Customer of the Month

Will Lambers is a local Saugatuck resident, an insurance adjuster working for Apex Adjusting, who uses his computer a lot.

Will recently had a virus—brought it to us for cleanup and hasn't had a problem since. He was referred to us by Lance Winchester (who has been with us for several years now) who had the same virus several months ago and also has not had a problem since.

Will covers the entire State of Michigan and all of Northern Indiana for Apex. Lately, with all the foreclosures, business has improved for Will. Along with Rob Boyce, he makes several trips to Detroit every week, leaving at 4am and arriving at daylight. He told me that he frequently sees houses that have been gutted; they even take the aluminum siding up to the gables (but they don't get on the ladder to get the siding at the top).

Will told me that it's a great thing that we are local, he can get what he needs without having to go anywhere, and our guys at the office do an outstanding job (good job guys!)

Will asked that we don't include his contact information.



The crocus is one of the first flowers of spring. Before anything else shows signs of life, I see my crocus poking through the snow.

We'd love to hear from you!

Is there an article you'd like to comment on? A topic you would like for us to research? A question about using your computer? Perhaps a funny story or a resource that you want to share with other subscribers?

Send it over!

We are always looking for new and useful content to add to our newsletter.

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This newsletter is the occasional publication of Big Blue Water LLC. It's purpose is to communicate with our customers, providing little tips and pieces of information that might help them to better use their computer systems.