Anti-Virus Protection

Microsoft says MSE establishes baseline for others

When troubleshooting virus-infected computers, OCS technicians routinely install Microsoft Security Essentials (MSE, or Windows Defender on Windows 8) when no current antivirus software is installed.

Over the last few years MSE has proved to be capable, unintrusive, and well-integrated with Windows

It's also free, and it doesn't hassle users with paid-version upgrade notices. CNET's review says, "Microsoft Security Essentials is basically a good set-it-and-forget-it security program."

Recently however, MSE has been slipping in independent tests when compared to other antivirus programs. While it rates well in performance and usability categories, it's near the bottom in terms of protection.

Microsoft says this is by design. In a recent interview, senior program manager Holly Stewart of the company's Malware Protection Center said that MSE is a "baseline" that's designed to "always be on the bottom" of antivirus tests. She said Microsoft sees MSE as a first layer of protection and advises Windows users who need more to use an additional third-party antivirus program.

This is because, she said, "Microsoft shares its information with other antivirus makers and helps them make their products better. We're providing all of that information to our partners so they can do at least as well as we are …. so we will always be on the bottom of these tests."

She stressed that it's not because MSE isn't good enough to stand on its own. Rather than focus on making its own antivirus the best in the business, Stewart said Microsoft was "doing everything we can to protect against real threats" and passing data on those threats to other antivirus makers, so multiple parties can target the problems.

In practice, she said it means Microsoft is focusing on tracking emerging threats and sharing that data within the security industry, saying that's a more meaningful way to protect customers.

Some industry pundits are buying this, while others are skepti-

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Anti-Virus Protection
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cal. Many user comments are supportive, claiming their experience using MSE has been positive (which matches ours at OCS).

Others suspect that Microsoft's decision to play coach and support the team of other antivirus players may have more to do with complaints from the industry about how the bundling of a free antivirus product with Windows represents unfair competition.

Either way, it is simply too risky to use a computer that's connected to the Internet without up-to-date malware protection software. As stated earlier, we install MSE when no current antivirus software is found, and we've discovered that it will often find problems that other free programs miss, while also not interfering with the cleanup process as other software sometimes does.

If Windows Defender is not installed on your computer and you're interested in MSE, just search for Microsoft Security Essentials at the **microsoft.com** download site.

Of course, if you're interested in more robust security a number of paid programs are available from vendors like Symantec, McAfee and Kapersky … or TrendMicro, which powers the global enterprise-scale antivirus service behind OCS OfficeScan for automatic and transparent overnight updates – call us for more information.

Windows 8.1 Upgrade Report

This is a brief report on the experience of upgrading from Windows 8 Pro to 8.1 Pro. It was as "clean" an upgrade as possible, having just received a new ultrabook with Windows 8 preinstalled.

Microsoft's online instructions direct you to the Windows 8 Store on your computer, where you should find the 8.1 download.

If you don't find it in the Store – as I did not – you're directed to make sure all Windows updates are installed. This is not uncommon, since factory preinstalled versions of Windows are not usually completely current.

After letting Windows search for new updates and installing all of them, the Windows 8 Store prominently displayed the 8.1 upgrade promotion. For Windows Pro the download was around 3.5 GB, and it took several hours to complete. However, if you pause the download or it gets interrupted, it resumes where it left off rather than starting over. The completed upgrade then steps you through the usual preference settings, and you're done!

If you'd like for the OCS Service & Repair Shop to do this upgrade for you on a new or existing computer, please contact our office.

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Basic	125K	500K	750K	12GB	5	100.00	100.00	49.95
Premium	250K	1M	1.5M	20GB	5			79.95
BUSINESS								
Business	500K	2.5M	3.5M	40GB	10			129.95
Professional	750K	3.5M	4.5M	50GB	25			159.95
Corporate	1M	4.5M	6M	60GB	30			199.95
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