



# DWPC Technology Newsletter

Technology news from David W. Potts Consulting, LLC

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**Welcome to the twenty-ninth edition** of the *DWPC Technology Newsletter*. We hope you find this information helpful. If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please send us an email, indicating such. If you received this newsletter from a friend and wish to be added to the mailing list, please send an email to the address above and indicate your desire to receive the newsletter. Please feel free to share this newsletter with your friends.

## **Massive DDoS attack, 10/21/2016, affected many Websites—and why you can help avoid these!**

A Distributed Denial of Service (or DDoS) attack is something nefarious entities cook up to make people's Internet-connected devices overload sites on the Internet. These devices can include anything hackable, including IoT (Internet of Things) devices (such as Ring doorbells, Nest devices, Smart TVs, etc.). Reportedly, the DDoS attack, 10/21/2016, took popular Websites offline, such as Etsy, iHeart Radio, NetFlix, PayPal, Spotify and Twitter (just to name a few of the affected Websites). One way to help ensure your device(s) are not vulnerable to hacking is to ensure you change the default password of your Internet-connected devices, using a “strong” password (at least 8 characters, with upper and lower-case characters and at least one number or special character).

## **What's this wireless alphabet soup?**

Computer Wireless (WiFi) b, a, g, n, ac, 2.4 GHz, 5 GHz . . . what does this all mean? All these letters relate to wireless network communication standards. These standards, part of IEEE 802.11 (from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering). The IEEE is an international body that develops, tests, ratifies and helps implement standards. All the aforementioned WiFi standards (b, a, g, n and ac) are subsections of 802.11 . . . so they are actually 802.11b, 802.11a, through 802.11ac. Each version specifies how the WiFi connection will work . . . and, generally, at what speed (some manufacturers build in enhancements that may only work with their specific equipment, that can provide higher speeds). The standards were developed in the sequence identified in the first sentence of this paragraph. Each generation (802.11b being the first) allows faster wireless network connections than the last. The later standards also provide better fault tolerance. Now for the frequency bands . . . 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz. The 2.4 GHz band is rather congested (the FCC licenses relatively few frequency bands for public use), and is shared by many devices, other than computers, including older wireless phones, microwave ovens and surveillance cameras. As such, there can be issues when using the 2.4 GHz band, due to interference. The 5 GHz band is less congested . . . and can have greater range than the 2.4 GHz band, but not all equipment supports the 5 GHz band. All WiFi standards have multiple individual frequency channels, within their frequency “band”. The “2.4 GHz band” operates around the 2,400,000,000 Hz (Hertz, or cycles per second) frequency, where the “5 GHz band” operates around 5,000,000,000 Hz. Both these frequency bands are considered “microwave” frequencies (microwave is generally considered frequencies between 1,000,000,000 Hz and 100,000,000,000 Hz). Microwave radiation (the WiFi signal is “transmitted” or “radiated”) acts in a “line-of-sight”, meaning a wall (or other obstacle) will attenuate (absorb) a signal less when the equipment is at perpendicular angle than an acute angle. In a nutshell, if you have an older wireless access point (or wireless router or gateway), you may receive better performance by upgrading to a newer WiFi standard, or by repositioning your WiFi access point, using high gain antennas or adding wireless range extenders. We will be happy to assist you with your wireless networking and securing your network. Please give us a call and we can discuss your options.

## **Why did my Windows 10 Desktop switch to look like Windows 8?**

Windows 10 includes a “Tablet Mode” that tries to help users with Windows 10 tablets and convertibles have an easier experience. Windows 10 tries to determine when a computer is in the “tablet” orientation, then can switch to Tablet Mode, automatically. Sometimes, Windows gets this wrong. Select the Windows “Start Charm”, type in “tablet” then select “Tablet mode settings” then manually take control of your Tablet mode options.

**Microsoft Windows Vista “sunset” reminder.** If you are still using a computer running Microsoft Windows Vista, it’s time to start looking for another computer. Microsoft will drop final support for Windows Vista, April 11, 2017. This means that Microsoft will no longer offer updates to Vista, so any new vulnerabilities will never be patched. There are already many software titles not supported under Windows Vista, at this time, such as Google Chrome. Although, technically, most Windows Vista computers could likely run Windows 10, due to the age of the hardware, users will be better served replacing the computer(s). Generally, programs that ran under Windows Vista should be able to run under Windows 10. Please let us help you determine a good computer to suit your needs, then help transition your data and programs to your new computer.

### **Why can’t I control things in Windows 10, like I could with earlier versions of Windows?**

You may notice that some controls you used to have with earlier versions of Windows don’t seem available with Windows 10. As an example, until a recent update to Windows 10, if you opened the Windows 10 “Settings” then selected “Devices”, you could add and remove printers, and set your default printer, but you couldn’t control other printer settings, like the old “Devices and Printers” Control Panel (the aforementioned update added a new “Manage” button, providing additional options). Albeit rather hidden, the old Control Panel and its regular options can be accessed by selecting the Windows 10 “Start Charm”, then typing “control panel” [in the Windows 10 search utility] and selecting the “Control Panel Desktop App” from the Windows Search results. Select “Hardware and Sound” (if in Category View), then select Devices and Printers, to open the more familiar interface. Other “hidden” options can be uncovered, using the powerful Windows Search utility. As Windows 10 matures, we can expect updates will allow users easier access to more of the commonly used options and features.

**Scam and fraud resources** are available through the office of the Oregon Attorney General. As scammers are quickly creating elaborate ways to separate you from your money, I strongly suggest you use complex passwords, that you change often, and visit the Oregon Attorney General's Web site at [www.oregonconsumer.gov](http://www.oregonconsumer.gov), to keep abreast of newer scams and help learn ways to keep you and your family safer. You can also contact Ellen Klem of the Oregon Attorney General's office at [ellen.klem@state.or.us](mailto:ellen.klem@state.or.us) or 503.507.1061.

**Java and QuickTime Security Alerts!** As Oracle's Java and Apple’s QuickTime continue to be security risks, I am continuing to include warnings in my newsletters. You can view the alert from Homeland Security about QuickTime, here: <https://www.us-cert.gov/ncas/alerts/TA16-105A>. Oracle has published a Web page that details how to disable the Java program, at: [http://www.java.com/en/download/help/disable\\_browser.xml](http://www.java.com/en/download/help/disable_browser.xml). Either program can be uninstalled from the Programs and Features Control Panel. If you do need to run Java, ensure you are using the latest release and remove any old versions. If you have any questions about this or other security issues (or any other computer questions), please feel free to contact David W. Potts Consulting and we will be happy to help you.

**How do I . . .** Please submit questions to me via email to the email address at the top of page 1. Questions may be answered in future issues of this newsletter, or may be addressed individually. I often have clients who exclaim, after my correcting their issue, how they have been frustrated by working on an issue for weeks before calling me. Often the problem takes less than an hour to correct. Many mention how, next time, they will call me first to avoid the frustration! I have helped people do things from selecting and programming a high-tech remote control to setting up a company’s network infrastructure.

**David W. Potts Consulting** will be happy to assist you with your hardware, software and network selection, purchase, integration, troubleshooting and training. We specialize in Microsoft Windows computers and networking and can also assist you with home theatre and other electronics and technology consulting.

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