



# DWPC Technology Newsletter

Technology news from David W. Potts Consulting, LLC

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**Welcome to the thirty-fourth 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.

**Holiday gift list, 2017:** As another year comes to a close, options abound for holiday gifts for 2017. There are a number of good cell phone options, as well as new options to switch your phone carrier or plan. Tablets, drones, 3D printers and MFPs (multifunction peripherals—printer/scanner/copier/[fax]) remain hot commodities. Large LED monitors continue to come down in price and their resolution continues to increase. 4K (UHD) TVs offer 4x the resolution of 1080p displays, producing displays that mimic nature—and continue to become more reasonably priced. There are now UHD Blu-Ray players and disks . . . to display 4K content on your new UHD screen (which can also “upscale” your older content to UHD). Beware of “gimics”, such as curved screens, which may be more hype than benefit. Sound bars and Surround Sound systems can augment the sound of a flat screen TV. Universal remote controls are also a good gift (I like the Logitech Harmony series). Desktop, notebook, UltraBook, tablet and convertible computers continue to get faster and less expensive. USB hard disk drives for backup (or a subscription to an online (Cloud-based) backup service) are also great gifts.

**IT'S NOT REALLY MICROSOFT!!** Despite multiple warnings to not call when pop-ups display a warning to call to resolve computer issues and to not allow phone scammers to connect to your computer, I have experienced multiple clients who have succumbed to these scams, over the last couple of months. These scammers try to express a sense of urgency . . . that you must work with them, immediately, or risk your data . . . and often represent themselves as being representatives of Microsoft. **These people are NOT representatives of Microsoft.** If these scammers are allowed access to your computer, they can do harm to your computer, including holding it hostage. Unfortunately, many of these scammers use advanced techniques that can make it nearly impossible to recover, without knowing exactly what it was they did (often they make changes to obscure settings, deep in the bowels of Windows). **I cannot express strongly enough that you should never allow anyone who is not trusted access to your computer!** One way to help protect yourself from scams, as well as viruses and other malware, is to back your computer up, regularly.

**Wireless WPA2 security hacked!** WPA2 (WiFi Protected Access V. 2), the latest version of encryption for WiFi connections, has been hacked, allowing attackers to break into wireless [WiFi] networks [protected with WPA2 encryption]. WiFi encryption is the way data sent over the wireless network is “secured”, so it cannot be captured and used (until “decrypted”, the data is scrambled and unusable). This vulnerability could affect computers, smart phones, tablets and other WiFi devices. October 16, 2017, the US Department of Homeland Security’s Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT) announced WPA2 had been hacked. US-CERT further states the issue is with the specifications of the WPA2 standard, not in the specific implementation by vendors. As such, *all* WiFi networks that use WPA2 encryption could be at risk. Vendors are working to patch the firmware and software for their products to close this vulnerability. Updating your wireless router, wireless access point and wireless devices [with firmware, drivers and software that address the issues] should correct the issues, once said patches are available. You can find the entire article at this URL: <https://www.kb.cert.org/vuls/id/228519/>.

**Do I need a new router?** If your router or gateway (a gateway is an Internet modem and a [wireless] router in the same physical box) is more than a few years old, you will likely benefit by replacing it. As time passes, new security measures and new standards are introduced, that are not available in older routers or gateways. New technologies can also increase the speed of modems and gateways. If your modem or gateway is being leased from your ISP, you can likely get it upgraded, at no cost (and, if leasing a modem, you can likely get a modem replaced with a wireless gateway, at no cost). Please let us help you if you would like help with your router or gateway.

**More restrictive distracted driving laws in Oregon!** As many Oregonians know, many states, including Oregon, have had laws on the books for years, allowing drivers to be ticketed if they are distracted by using a “wireless device”, while driving. In Oregon, this had been generally limited to using cell phones [without a BlueTooth device] for conversing and for any texting, or using an entertainment device, such as a portable DVD player or television, while driving. As of October 1, 2017, Oregon HB2597 includes holding nearly anything electronic, including, but not limited to, phones, tablets, televisions or other entertainment devices or GPS units. Hands-free units may be allowed, as long as both hands are kept on the steering wheel (a single tap of a device that is attached to the automobile is permitted). The new law also applies if the driver is stopped at a stop light. The first offense in a 10 year period results in a Class B traffic violation. If the first violation results in an accident or there is a second violation within 10 years, the resulting violation is a Class A traffic violation. Multiple offenses can result in larger fines and incarceration, for up to 6 months. ODOT states a driver must legally pull over before touching their electronic device, to comply with this new law. Washington State has even further distracted driving restrictions. The verbiage of the new [Oregon] law is available, here: <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2017R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB2597/Introduced>.

**How do I dispose of my old electronics?** Many of today’s electronics include hazardous materials, such as cadmium, lead and mercury. Although items such as batteries and florescent lamps (including compact florescent) must be recycled at your local recycling center (and there is a cost involved), many electronics, including desktop and portable computers, monitors, tablets, keyboards, mice, printers and MFPs (multifunction peripherals) can be dropped off at “Oregon e-Cycles” locations, free of charge. **Hard disk drives and memory cards should be removed or securely erased before recycling them.** You may visit the Oregon DEQ "E-Cycles" Web site at <http://www.deq.state.or.us/lq/ecycle> for details about the quantities and items accepted, as well as the locations that participate in the program. In the Portland area, a group named Free Geek will also accept old computer equipment, and recycle it for use by those who cannot afford a new computer (they will likely ask for an optional monetary donation). You can find out more about Free Geek at [www.freegeek.org](http://www.freegeek.org). Please let David W. Potts Consulting assist you with securely erasing your hard disk drives or with data recovery or transfer before recycling old computers. If you have an old hard disk drive that contains data you need, we can likely assist you with extracting the data and placing it onto a USB hard disk drive or Flash drive.

**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 the US Computer Emergency Readiness Team about QuickTime, at <https://www.us-cert.gov/ncas/alerts/TA16-105A>. Oracle has a Web page that details how to disable Java, 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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