

Windows Administrators Meeting

August 13, 2004

Notes (taken by Steve Kunz)

Meeting Started (9:05)

Announcements

- On Tuesday, August 3, the ISU AIT “Computer Inspector” was released to the WinAdmin and CCSG groups for testing. On Monday, August 9 the Inspector was hooked into the NetReg system so that new NetReg registrations in the residence halls were asked to inspect their system prior to network connection. On Wednesday, August 11, the “weak password checking” feature was added to the Inspector.

At this point the Inspector project is considered to be “stable” prior to Dorm Storm (next week). Bug fixes will of course be incorporated should they arise. It was noted that people can “bail out” of the inspection process and add their systems to the network without actually passing inspection. This is a “policy” issue that we hope to be able to change once statistics are collected on how many vulnerable systems were introduced onto the network due to bypassing the process. Preliminary statistics indicate this will be a significant number.

The AIT Computer Inspector can be used by anyone (from anywhere) at this point by the following URL:

<https://asw.iastate.edu/cgi-bin/acropolis/inspect>

Windows XP SP2

AIT staff talked about known issues with Windows XP SP2. Kunz indicated that it is well known at this point that Microsoft made a few significant changes to the product they called “XP SP2 Release Candidate 2” before it became the official “Release to Manufacturing” (RTM) product last weekend. These changes generally seem to affect Novell and OpenAFS clients. Items discussed in this meeting were:

- Pop-up Blocking: Frank Poduska (AIT) talked about how WebMail “Deluxe” users will begin to see WebMail pop-ups (used for over-quota messages, etc) be blocked by the Microsoft XP SP2 pop-up blocker (which is enabled by default). A Windows message will appear indicating that a pop-up was blocked. The message (a popup itself!) will contain some information about what to do if you want to see pop-ups. The Microsoft pop-up blocker has one nice advantage over other such products in that you can selectively allow pop-ups from one or more sites and block them for all others. Most other popup-blockers have an “all

or nothing” approach. This is, however, a “user education” issue. Instructions on configuring the Windows XP SP2 pop-up blocker for WebMail are being included in the WebMail help pages.

- Novell: Some Novell users have reported their system “pausing” at a blank screen (the color of the default background) and not showing the Windows/Novell login box. Pressing “Ctrl-Alt-Del” causes the login process to “unlock” and the normal login screen appears. This issue appears to relate the Novell process being a “Network Logon Provider” whose action is blocked by the new firewall. Not all Novell users experience this problem, but it may be one to watch out for. The only solution at this point appears to be “uninstall XP SP2” or “user education” (if this affects a particular system).
- OpenAFS: Kunz said that the OpenAFS authors discovered after XP SP2 was released last weekend that OpenAFS “locked up” when using the “Integrated Login” feature. The only fix is to upgrade to a quickly fixed version (released early this week). The announcement of the problem is on the OpenAFS web site at www.openafs.org (click “Read the XP SP Advisory” at the top of “OpenAFS News”). Basically if you are installing XP SP2 on a system that is running OpenAFS you must upgrade to OpenAFS 1.3.70. AIT has prepared a new “Advanced” Scout-kit which installs this version. This product is still in testing and will hopefully be released today or Monday. Beata Pruski will offer the kit under development to anyone willing to help test (send email to bapruski@iastate.edu). As with Novell clients, OpenAFS is a “Network Logon Provider” whose functionality is affected by the new XP firewall.
- MountAFSHome: As with OpenAFS, MountAFSHome (an “Advanced” Scout-kit that mounts a user’s AFS home directory via OpenAFS at login time) is affected by the Windows XP SP2 firewall. A new version of MountAFSHome is being prepared. Beata Pruski will offer the kit under development to anyone willing to help test (send email to bapruski@iastate.edu).
- Symantec Internet Security: This product is being offered by Microsoft to educational institutions in conjunction with official copies of XP SP2 (see next bullet). While this product should not directly relate to XP SP2 issues, one AIT user (Kunz) had recent bad experiences with Norton Internet Security 2004 on an XP Professional system. Symantec Internet Security may or may not be a related product). People are cautioned to test before deploying widely. The issues with Norton Internet Security 2004 relate to recent changes in LiveUpdate (within the last week) and instabilities created on XP Pro systems WITHOUT XP SP2 installed. Other people within the meeting commented that the copy of Symantec Internet Security provided by Microsoft may not even apply to XP SP2 systems, so this issue may be moot. There are a great many unknowns in this area as of yet.
- Redistribution of Hotfixes: Wayne Hauber (AIT) announced that Microsoft has

taken a “change in direction” on the legality of have a local copy of Microsoft service packs and hotfixes re-distributed within a local organization (such as Iowa State University). Universities are being told recently that local copies (whether network based or copies of CD-ROMs) that are distributed locally are illegal. The ONLY official distribution sites for Microsoft service packs and hotfixes are from Microsoft servers themselves. SUS servers (which receive official copies from Microsoft servers) are an exception. As a result of this change in policy, the deposit of the XP SP2 installation files will be removed from the network CCSG DFS share immediately. Departments are encouraged to remove any copies of XP SP2 from network shares and not distribute copies of Microsoft CD-ROMs. You can, however, order additional copies of the CD-ROM from Microsoft (see previous mailings to WinAdmin/CCSG with subject “FW: Microsoft Security Notice-Higher Education Volunteer Distribution Program”).

- ATS looking for input on what other departments are doing in regard to group policy and the activating/deactivating of the Windows XP SP2 firewall. Jess Robinson (CARD) and Web Wilke (Residence Halls) both indicated they were going to allow the firewall to be enabled. If you have any feedback on what your department will do, send email to Rich Jones (ATS) at rdjones@iastate.edu .

Open Discussion

Nobody had any additional issues to discuss.

Meeting Adjourned (about 9:50)

Next meeting is scheduled September 10.