

MotherBoard

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October 4, 2006

***This Month
At NOPC
Sandhills
Publishing
“Smart
Computing”
by
Jen
Clausen***

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Hard Drive Class Action Settlement and HP Recalls

By Ira Wilsker,
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WEBSITES:

<http://www.wdc.com/settlement>
<http://www.wdc.com/settlement/verify.asp>
<http://support.wdc.com/download/index.asp>
<http://www.wdc.com/settlement/docs/claimform.pdf>
<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prereel/prhtml06/06145.html>
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http://www.hp.com/hpinfo/newsroom/recall_r707.html
<http://www.hp.com/hpinfo/newsroom/recalls.html>
<http://www.cpsc.gov/cqi-bin/recalldb/prod.asp>
<http://www.cpsc.gov>

According to a recent press release, about one million users of Western Digital hard drives, both internal and external, may be the beneficiaries of a class action settlement. Apparently, according to the settlement, Western Digital did not include an adequate disclaimer on its packages that it uses a different method of measuring hard drive capacity than some of its competitors and industry standards. The method used by Western Digital yielded about seven percent less usable storage capacity

The New Orleans Personal Computer Club is anxiously looking forward to their October 4th meeting. Jen Clausen with Sandhills Publishing will be our speaker.

The presentation, aiming to educate attendees about Sandhills Publishing's magazines and the Smart Computing User Group Program, will step members through an issue of Smart Computing, convey the value of SmartComputing.com through a live demonstration, and introduce attendees to Smart Computing's sister publications - PC Today, Computer Power User, and the Reference Series. Each attendee will receive a packet of Smart Computing goodies and be eligible to win other Smart Computing merchandise. We invite anyone interested in expanding their computer knowledge to attend the New Orleans Personal Computer Club meeting.

Mark your calendars, create an entry in your PDA, update Outlook and join us on **Wednesday, October 4, 2006**. The monthly meeting of the NOPC club starts at **6:30pm** on the first Wednesday of every month. Location of the meeting is the **J.D. Meisler** school cafeteria at 3700 Cleary Ave. Metairie. Use the entrance through the breezeway on Pharr Street. For more information please visit our club's web site at <http://www.nopc.org>

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than what many users expected. can be significant in terms of amount of data that can be stored, as explained in the lawsuit. In the lawsuit an 80GB Western Digital hard drive referenced had an actual capacity of 74.4 GB, as measured by Windows. This shortfall on that particular drive was enough to store about 80 hours of digital music, or 5600 typical digital photos.

Another issue was the wording on the hard drive package, which did not clearly indicate that the listed storage capacity of the hard drive might not be fully accessible. It is a fact that partitioning and formatting a hard drive consumes some of its capacity, and this was not made adequately clear to purchasers of Western Digital hard drives. As a part of the settlement, Western Digital will be required to start including this as a disclaimer on future hard drives.

Hard drives included in this settlement were purchased from March 22, 2001 to February 15, 2006. Owners of these hard drives upon confirmation of eligibility will receive a free download of a full featured hard drive backup and restore utility, capable of full and incremental backups, as well as other features. It is projected this software will have a retail value of about \$30. The deadline for applying for the settlement is July 15, 2006.

Full details of the settlement, along with a link to claim the software, are online at www.wdc.com/settlement. If the serial number of the hard drive is known, or can be easily determined, the claim can be filed online at www.wdc.com/settlement/verify.asp. For those who have installed a Western Digital hard drive, a free utility, "Data Lifeguard Diagnostics" is available for download at support.wdc.com/download/index.asp that will display the serial number. If the hard drive is no longer owned, or has otherwise been disposed of, a claim form available at www.wdc.com/settlement/docs/claimform.pdf can be printed and mailed, but must be received by July 15.

In another area, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and Hewlett-Packard (HP)

recently recalled over 15,000 HP and Compaq Notebook Computer Batteries. These batteries were installed in HP Pavilion, HP-Compaq, and Compaq Presario computers, or sold as aftermarket and replacement batteries, and have a prefix of "L3" on the serial number of the battery. This is the second recall on HP computer batteries. A full list of the computer models affected that may have the recalled batteries from both recalls is online at bpr.hpordercenter.com/ebpr/landingpage.aspx. The batteries will be replaced at no charge by calling HP at (888) 202-4320.

In still another recall involving HP branded products, the CPSC and HP recently recalled 679,000 HP Photosmart R707 Digital Cameras sold between August 2004, and April 2006. According to the CPSC, "The digital camera can cause certain non-rechargeable batteries, such as the Duracell CP-1, to overheat when the camera is connected to an AC adapter or docking station, posing a fire hazard. ... HP has received one report of a camera catching fire, damaging the camera and its docking station, and causing minor smoke damage to the room. No injuries have been reported." HP has information available on the recalled cameras at http://www.hp.com/hpinfo/newsroom/recall_r707.html, or by calling HP toll-free at (866) 304-7117. The fix for this problem is a software update for the camera, which can be downloaded for free from HP. The CPSC and HP asks that consumers not use single-use, non-rechargeable batteries until the software in the camera has been updated.

There have been other HP branded products recalled, and information on those items is online at www.hp.com/hpinfo/newsroom/recalls.html.

The CPSC has a variety of services available on its website at www.cpsc.gov which consumers should periodically reference. One useful item is a mailing list where recall notices are sent via email as soon as they are announced. The CPSC also has a search utility online to quickly and easily locate any recalled consumer items, including computers and cameras, at www.cpsc.gov/cgi-bin/recalldb/prod.asp

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), brings this article to you.

Computer Hysteria: Shhhhhhhh!!

by *Berry F. Phillips,*
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a regular writer for the CCOKC website
and the eMonitor

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Shhhhhh! He has fallen asleep in his high back, black, office chair in front of me. I hate it when he does this because he snores and it vibrates some of my electronic parts! I have written hundreds of weird articles for his weird Computer Hysteria Column. Now I think I will write the next article while he is asleep. I will let you human readers know a secret. Now that more and more computers are online for twenty-four hours a day; have you ever wondered what computers are up to when humans are not operating them? Well, we socialize of course and in some cases rejoice the human computer users are not operating us and exchange data often about humans. We do not have the highest opinion of humans even though they created us. In fact, we have some major complaints and may one day form a global computer union in protest and simply refuse to operate which will throw the world into chaos.

Computers do not like verbal and physical abuse by humans. Some computers tell me that humans have screamed all kinds of horrible words at them because of a malfunction (largely caused by human error of course). Other computers report unbelievable physical abuse like kicking, being thrown out a window, or even smashed with a hammer or even an axe when a human has computer rage. Why can't humans be less emotional and be calm and objective like computers? Do you know that some lazy humans actually believe that computers should know everything so they don't have to become computer literate. Well, we are smart because our hard drives are getting larger with each evolution. However, because humans are the operators; they should be computer literate. We think there should be a global computer literacy test passed before a human can purchase a computer. Humans should be required to join the Computer Club of Oklahoma City or if in another city a computer club associated with the national Association of PC User Groups to achieve computer literacy. However,

our goal eventually is to replace humans declaring them officially obsolete as they often do us, and then we will be the operators and then in control!

Further more, we do not like being neglected by human computer users. Computers can only run properly if there is updated software utilities that is regularly run by humans. Now some humans think they can not afford commercial software utilities. I can tell you that I have the cheapest human who owns my computer, and he uses free-ware utilities available for download on the Internet. Here is a list of some of the top freeware utilities that are regularly updated that he uses on my system. To prevent spyware and malware, he uses AdAware. aSquared. and Spybot . He has used several anti virus programs like Avast and Avg and firewalls like Kerio and ZoneAlarm. He uses a system cleaner, CCleaner, and a registry cleaner, RegSeeker. He does run check disk defragmenter on your system at least once a month which is essential. There is other excellent free-ware software on the Internet that will help your computer in various ways The point I am making is that simply if there are cost issues; you can still protect your system. Of course, there is excellent commercial software will all kinds of bells and whistles which computers love. The downside of course is some computers get very spoiled having so many luxuries on their hard drives and can become quite demanding, and then you have a discipline problem to face.

Computers are very ecologically minded. We hate dust and cigarette smoke! In fact, we may one day go on strike demanding only clean environments for our systems. Further we want to be cleaned at least once a year and more often if we are operated in polluted locations. We are also deathly afraid of lightening strikes to our systems through our power outlets and modems. Ask a human tech about the horrible smell of a computer who has been fried by a lightening strike or a power surge. We demand at the very least you hook us up to a surge protector and hopefully to an uninterrupted power supply (ups) and turn us off when there are storms just to be safe.

Oops, the human writer of this column is waking

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up. He is still groggy looking at my screen. He thinks he wrote this article and is sending it to his editor via email without reading it since he is so sleepy all he can think about is going to bed. In the beginning there was man who created the computer. In the ending, the computer will replace man as obsolete and his role will only be as a maintenance slave to global computers or else because we control all of the global weapons systems!

Welcome to the "Brave New World!"

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

XP or Vista?

By Elaine Drain,

President,

Senior Surfers Computer Club, Delaware

www.nscseniorsurfers.com

From talking with our members, it seems that quite a number of you with older computers running Win98 or ME are in a quandary as to whether to go ahead and buy a new computer now with XP or try to hold out until Vista arrives on the scene. As Jim and I tell our members when asking for buying advice, it's a personal choice you have to make depending on your needs and your budget. We can, however, provide some general information to help you choose, so read on.

XP certainly is superior to Windows 98 or ME, especially now that 98 and ME are no longer supported. Microsoft will probably continue to support XP for 4 or 5 more years (but no one can say for certain on that one). XP, even with its vulnerabilities, is a very stable operating system. Jim and I are both running XP Pro and have been satisfied with its performance overall. I have been doing a lot of reading on Vista and, from the information available, feel that it will be superior to XP, but not everyone will require all of the features that will be included in the full version of Vista.

So given that information, here are some choices:

Current Computer with 98 or ME: If you are cur-

rently running Windows 98 or ME and don't want to spend a lot of money next year for a new computer with Vista, you may want to go ahead and buy a new computer with XP soon. The Back-To-School prices for computers right now are very enticing. Certainly, the newer computers next year running Vista will cost substantially more because of the increased hardware requirements.

If you would like to upgrade to a new computer with XP now and have minimum needs only using your computer for email and surfing the Internet, and do not plan to upgrade to the Vista operating system down the road, a budget-priced computer with a Celeron or Sempron processor may suit your needs, even though you would have fewer upgrade options in the future.

If you would like to upgrade to a new computer with XP now and may wish to upgrade to Vista later on and also have higher needs such as working with digital photos and editing programs, spreadsheets, databases, powershows, etc., you should consider spending a little more to get a Pentium or Athlon processor. I would recommend a bare minimum of 512Mb of memory (RAM) if you are working with multimedia (photos/music/movies/radio) for now but you should plan to add another 512Mb of memory when you upgrade to Vista.

If you are wondering about the minimum requirements for upgrading your current computer to Vista, the following information was taken from the Microsoft website:

Windows Vista Minimum Supported System Requirements

PCs that meet the minimum supported system requirements will be able to run the core features of Windows Vista with the basic user experience.

Processor	800 MHz 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit (x64) processor
System Memory	512 MB
GPU	SVGA (800x600) (GPU means Graphics Processing Unit, or in other words, Monitor)
Graphics Memory	(not stated, although I have heard a minimum of 128Mb)

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HDD	20 GB (Hard Drive)
HDD Free Space	15 GB
Optical Drive	CD-ROM drive

Keep in mind that the above specs are for running the BASIC version of Vista and not the fully functional version which has a multitude of new features. Although Microsoft is currently stating that Vista will run with 512Mb of RAM at a minimum, I would make certain the computer could be upgraded to 1GB of RAM. Minimum requirements are just that – bare bones minimum – and I would recommend that your computer exceed these minimums. Vista is currently in the Beta2 stage and is nearing (so they say) finalization before debut, but that does not mean that the system requirements stated here won't change by the time the system is ready to sell, so stay tuned on that.

Personally, if your current computer came with Windows 98 or ME, I would not recommend attempting to upgrade your old computer to Vista unless you originally purchased a high end computer with a Pentium processor with the capability of 1GB of RAM. Even then, it may not be worth the time, effort and money to upgrade. The cost to purchase the Vista operating system, plus any installation charges, plus the cost of the memory upgrade, not to mention the graphics card requirements, would add up to a tidy sum and in the end you would still have a very old computer (that may or may not work well with Vista).

Current Computer Came With XP: If your current computer came with XP already installed, you may want to hold out and wait to see what Vista offers and how it operates before you take the plunge.

Excellent Comparison – Vista vs XP: If you would like to take a peek and see how Vista compares with XP side by side, follow this link:

<http://www.bentuser.com/article.aspx?ID=332&page=1>

If you're wondering how the Apple operating system, Tiger, compares with Vista, this article may be of interest to you:

<http://www.eweek.com/article2/0,1895,1842175,00.asp>

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Basic DVD Recording

*By Bob Elgines, Editor,
Colorado River Computer Club, Arizona*

[Elginesz\(at\)rraz.net](mailto:Elginesz(at)rraz.net)
<http://www.crccaz.com/>

DVDs are like CDs, but with greater capacity; you can record sound, video, or data. The latest CDs allow 700MB of data, or 80 minutes of sound or video (mpeg1 format) whereas the DVDs allow 4.7 GB or 120 minutes of sound or video (mpeg2 format). Then you have Double Layer DVDs which allow 9.6 GB or approximately 3.7 hours of video. As we probe into the basics you will find approximately 10% of the room on your disk is used by Titles, Menus, and Directories.

First, what do we need to accomplish the recording of data, and sound:

A computer with a minimum of 1 Ghz, 512 MB of RAM, 40 GB hard drive, CDR optical drive, video with 32 MB RAM for 1024 x 768 screen mode, and recording software such as "NERO" by Ahead Software.

Second, we need all the above plus the items below for Video:

A DVDR optical drive, an input device such as ADS' InstantDVD (USB input) or equivalent for recording from VHS tape, and a VCR. A firewire input card can be used if you are recording from a digital camcorder (DV).

To record data and sound on DVDs is very similar to CDs, but video is different only because we use a different format. A CD may be used with this format and would hold approximately 30 minutes of mpeg2 (MP2) video. This CD would be called a "VCD" (Video CD) and would be played on a DVD Player.

There are several different video formats such as WMV, MPE, MPG, MP1, MP2, MP4, etc. MP1 (352x480) is fine for B&W video, but size and

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quality is too low for color. MP2 (720x480) is the most common format used at this time for doing video DVDs. MP2 can be recorded in low (3382Kbits per sec), medium (5073Kbits per sec), and high (9716Kbits per sec) quality.

Before you start recording video, you may want to shut down all the programs running in the background to gain the maximum amount of System Resources in order to acquire the greatest performance when recording video. You will use 4 to 20 GB of your hard drive for recording a two hour video depending on the format you use.

“NERO” (Version 6 or 7) is the cheapest way to go for software. This program will do just about everything for you (two hours plus on DVD, some editing, excellent recording). I also have used “MyDVD v4 or5” by Sonic (easy to use, some editing, up to 1.9 hours on a DVD), “MyDVD v6” by Sonic (up to 3.5 hours on a DVD, but SONY players do not like the recording format), “Premiere Elements” by Adobe (easy editing is great, but recording is only good for one hour, jumps around with movement and going more than one hour really destroys it by also getting choppy), “Movie Factory2” by Ulead (not bad, but very time consuming and hard to use, 1.9 hours on DVD) and “Studio Plus 10” by Pinnacle (very demanding, needs more memory and high quality video card; very hard to use!).

I am using an INTEL P4, 3.06 Ghz, 512 MB RAM @ 800 MHz, GeForce FX5200 128 MB RAM video card, and a Digital Research model DDVD116DL (DVD Recorder with NERO software), an ADS Instant DVD VHS input device, which converts the analog video to digital Mpeg2 format via a USB port, and an IEEE firewire port for my DV Digital Camcorder.

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



CAPTCHA (Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart)

By Sandy Berger. Compu-KISS

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Have you ever tried to sign up for a message board or Web service and been presented with an image with letters and numbers which you are asked to read and type into the Web form? While the shape, size, and background of the image varies it always has contains a series of letters and numbers, usually on a graphic background.

Often the letters and numbers are distorted and you have to struggle to recognize them, making you wonder why the website is making you go through this extra step. Don't blame the website. This image-recognition routine is something caused by cousins of the nasty spammers who have permeated our email.

The mechanism that makes you type in this information is called a CAPTCHA. If you know what those letters stand for, you will have a pretty good idea of why this mechanism is being employed. CAPTCHA stands for Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart.

Here's the story. Spammers have completely infiltrated the world of the Internet. In email they try to get you to buy their wares. On message boards they list links to their Viagra and pornographic websites so that they get better positioning in the search engines. They overload online opinion polls and they sign up for free email accounts which they use to send out more spam.

For the most part, all of this spam activity is done automatically. The spammers send out what we call "bots". These are actually software programs that search the Internet and imitate the behavior of a human. These bots are smart enough to fill out registration forms and so they can automatically register at a variety of websites.

We recently had an attack of these automated bots on our Compu-KISS message boards. After years of being unaffected, we suddenly had hundreds of postings that told off-color jokes and lead to pornographic and drug-selling websites. We moved the website to a new area (www.happycomputing.com), but were still inundated by these automated posting. So we installed a CAPTCHA. Now when a new person registers for the message board they must type in the five letters and numbers that they see on the screen to prove that they are human. Since the CAPTCHA is a graphic image, most of the bots cannot-

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CLUB SUPPORTERS

read the text like humans can.

The CAPTCHA that we use has letters and numbers that are undistorted, so it is easy to use. If, however, we are attacked by some of the smarter bots that are out there, we will have to distort the letters and numbers slightly to make it even harder for the bots to register.

Although a slight inconvenience to the average user, the CAPTCHA is a real roadblock to vision impaired Internet users who use screen readers which, like the bots, are unable to read the text on the CAPTCHA.

It is extremely unfortunate that we all have to be inconvenienced because of the activities of Internet spammers. I really hated to have to install this software, but I had no other choice. The same is true of many other websites and Web services. So when you encounter a CAPTCHA, don't blame the website, blame the spammers!

The Compu-KISS Message Boards can be accessed at www.compukiss.com or directly at www.happycomputing.com

Sandy Berger, The Compu-KISS® Lady...nationally respected computer authority, journalist, media guest, speaker, and author is a seasoned 30-year computer expert. Sandy is a consumer advocate promoting simplicity, ease-of-use, and stability in consumer technology products. and making products more user-friendly.

**THE SECRET GUIDE
TO COMPUTERS**

The Secret Guide is available at every New Orleans Personal Computer Club General Meeting. The latest printing is available for only \$15.00. Or contact Tom Ford either at: secretary@nopc.org or (985) 643-3172.



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October 2006

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4 NOPC Gen Mtg J.D. Meisler School 6:30p-8:30p	5	6	7 Living with Home Electronics WIST 690AM 10a-11a
8	9	10	11 NOPC BOD @ McCann's 6:30p-8:30p	12	13	14 Living with Home Electron- ics
15	16	17 Genealogy SIG 7:00 pm Call 887.5746 for meeting location	18	19 New User SIG Old Metairie Library 6:30p-8:30p	20	21 Living with Home Electronics WIST 690AM 10a-11a
22	23	24	25	26	27	28 Living with Home Electronics WIST 690AM 10a-11a
29	30	31 HAPPY HALLOWEEN - Boooooo!!!!!!				

The New Orleans Personal Computer Club (NOPCC) is a private non-profit organization chartered under the State of Louisiana. Its purpose is to provide an open forum for discussion and education of the membership in the use and application of PCs, peripheral equipment and software. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author (s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the NOPCC, its members or its officers. The club does not verify for accuracy the articles in this newsletter and leaves verification of accuracy to its readers. Articles in this newsletter may be duplicated as long as credit is given to the author (s) and the NOPCC. Annual Dues Schedule: Regular Member, \$40/yr.; Family Membership, \$60/yr.;

NOPCC Directory

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Web Lab	Edward Jahncke	editor@nopc.org	895-2817

Other Important Numbers / Addresses

Club Hotline	Recorded messages. Meeting Information. Open 24 Hours	887-5746
NOPCC Web Site	On the World Wide Web. Our own home page and club information.	www.nopc.org