

Computer Security Briefing For New Faculty

How to keep your computer and Wayne State University's systems safe

While computers are indispensable tools for many aspects of our work at a university, they also are a potential source of danger, both to us and to the university. We need to get into the habit of treating them as if they contain very valuable objects. Just as we know where our wallets and purses are at all times, and don't leave them lying around, so too should we treat our computers as if they could be easily stolen and misused.

Virtually all faculty members at Wayne State are entrusted with a computer when they begin working here. That computer needs to be kept in a state that makes it difficult to be attacked or for the data on it to be exploited.

Here are steps you must take to keep your computer safe and secure:

- Make sure your computer has antivirus software installed, that the program is set to update itself regularly, and that the virus definitions are kept up to date as well. WSU's Software Clearinghouse provides full featured Symantec AntiVirus software for free. Visit computing.wayne.edu/software for links to download this and other software that is supported by WSU's Computing & Information Technology (C&IT) Help Desk.
- Most computer operating systems are automatically updated by the company supplying the system. Check to make sure that automatic updating of your computer's operating system software is enabled. The technical term for this is patching, and you must keep your computer patched. If you don't know how to do this, contact the computer support person for your school, college, or department. You can find that person's name, e-mail address, and phone number at computing.wayne.edu/deptsupport, or you can contact the C&IT Help Desk (see below).
- All newer operating systems come with a built-in firewall to deter unauthorized access and malicious use of your computer. It must be turned on and correctly configured for the type of work you do. Again, if you don't know how to do this, contact your computer support person or the C&IT Help Desk (see below).
- Finally, be careful with the data (documents, spreadsheets, research data) that you store on your computer and on any additional devices, such as CDs, USB drives (also called thumb drives or flash drives), iPods, etc. Don't put anything on these or other storage devices that could cause problems if they fell into the wrong hands. This includes social security numbers, research data on human subjects, or any information that could be used by an identity thief or that could cause harm to you, anyone referred to in the data, or the university as a whole. If such data must be placed on a portable device (USB drive, laptop, etc.), make sure it is encrypted. For help, contact available computer support.

If you have questions about any of these computer security practices, feel free to contact the C&IT Help Desk by calling (313) 577-4778 or sending an e-mail to helpdesk@wayne.edu. You also can find more safe computing principles and links to additional resources on C&IT's Website at computing.wayne.edu/security.