

Online Privacy

Commercial Internet sites were recently surveyed and appear to be collecting less personal information from consumers. They are doing a slightly better job explaining how their Web sites use sensitive data, according to The Progress & Freedom Foundation, a Washington, DC think tank.

Have a specific question? We'll print an answer in the next edition of FastTips.

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Windows XP Update Tested

Microsoft has released a version of the Windows XP (WinXP) update to testers. The update, called Service Pack 1 (SP1) has been sent to 10,000 testers. WinXP SP1 should make it easier for users to choose to install third-party software applications rather than Microsoft's own products.

WinXP SP1 introduces four options for managing, customizing or removing Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, Windows Media Player, Windows Messenger, the Java Virtual Machine, and other applications. SP1 also introduces support for new technologies--such as Mira "smart" display devices, Tablet PCs and the Freestyle digital media interface.

Look for WinXP SP1 to be publicly released within a few months.

Write This Down

The Internet newsgroups are a buzz with news that the copy protection on Sony Music CDs can be cracked with a 49-cent felt tip marker. Details at dgl.com/itinfo/2002/it020521.html.

New Lightbulb Affects Wi-Fi Networks

Fusion Lighting, a Rockville, Maryland-based company, has designed a new lightbulb that uses radio frequency energy to generate a bright glob from a gas enclosed in glass. The new light technology is energy efficient, and it may replace traditional bulbs for organizations and homes that are looking to reduce operating costs through the adoption of new technology.

This sounds good for the operating budgets and the environment; however, the radio signals used to excite the gas are in the same spectrum as popular 802.11b (Wi-Fi) wireless networks. And moreover, Wi-Fi networks located in one building can be affected by a Fusion Lighting bulb that's up to a half mile away. The networking problem may not be readily apparent, either, because Wi-Fi networks operate a different bandwidths, ranging from 2Mbps to 11Mbps, at the slower bandwidths, the networks and lighting fixtures can coexist, so network administrators may have a difficult time figuring out the

cause of their slower (but not fully inoperable) networks because there are other alternatives that can cause wireless bandwidth degradation.

The lightbulbs don't affect 802.11a wireless networks because they operate in a different frequency spectrum. It's known yet if the new 802.11g networks will be affected by the lightbulbs; however, it seems to me that they will because they are more similar to the 802.11b spectrum.

Faster DVD Recorders

Sharp and Mitsubishi Electric, two Japanese manufacturers, have developed more powerful laser diodes, the components that produce the beam of light used to read and write data from DVD disks.

The 100 milliwatt pulse lights, about 40 percent more powerful than current technology will allow a doubling of recording speed for DVD recordable and rewritable drives. DVD burners using the new 100mW technology are available now.