



Critical Information Concerning the use of Windows XP and WITS

April 23, 2014

Dear Customers,

We wish to make sure that everyone is aware of the vulnerabilities of using the Windows XP operating system with WITS, or with any other system containing protected health information.

Microsoft has officially discontinued its support of Windows XP on April 8, 2014. While this might not seem like a big deal to many users, and to many applications that might function within this operating system, there are some very real issues surrounding its use in regard to systems containing protected health information. In the cyber-security community, it is generally considered that customers continuing to use XP for access to systems containing PHI face much greater risk of data breaches and HIPAA compliance violations. Knowingly using unsecure technology could lead to charges of negligence should such a breach occur.

- 1) There are many vulnerability notification services out there that publish (to the world) known issues with software. This will continue to happen with Windows XP. However, the fact that Microsoft will no longer provide patches or releases to remedy those vulnerabilities creates an environment that tells hackers how best to easily access data, knowing that nothing will be done to prevent this access.
- 2) Use of updated technology and operating systems, especially concerning the protection of PHI, is always a good business practice. Use of up-to-date and supported operating systems provides a more stable, resilient platform providing greater assurance that organizations can continue to rely upon the applications and systems upon which their missions depend for support.
- 3) Many leading voices within the highly regulated healthcare sector suggest that failure to move off of XP constitutes a violation of HIPAA. FEi's Chief Security and Privacy Officer, who has worked with DHHS, CMS, and OCR since the inception of the legislation, believes the risk of a compliance violation is simply too great to ignore. By continuing to use an unsupported operating system, knowing full well that it is no longer updated or patched, those subject to HIPAA/HITECH leave themselves open to the very real possibility of a security/privacy rules set violation.

Due to the threats of continued use of Windows XP, FEi is requesting that all government organizations and providers using WITS move to a supported environment, such as Windows 7, as quickly as possible. Windows 7 gives the added benefit of being able to upgrade to Internet Explorer versions beyond IE8. IE10 and IE11, easily available with Windows 7, are much more standards-based than earlier versions of IE. Benefit: moving to IE 10 or IE 11 will create many fewer issues in the new, Beta UI version of WITS.

One final note: As we believe it is imperative that all organizations move away from Windows XP, the WITS team at **FEi will cease active support of IE versions below IE 10 as of 10/1/2014.** As mentioned, use of Windows 7 as an operating system will allow users to upgrade to IE 10 or IE 11.