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100% cure for Conficker

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On April 1st, the Conficker worm, perhaps the most wide-spread malware program in history, is set to activate. We don't know what Conficker will do [1], but it's a safe bet it won't be anything nice to the hundreds of thousands of Windows PCs [2] that have been infected with it. Will it strip out every credit-card number within these PCs? Launch a massive DDoS (Distributed Denial of Service) attack [3]? Subscribe you to PETA porn!? We don't know.

I don't want to find out myself. There are several ways you can *try* to protect yourself from Conficker. These include disabling AutoRun [4], since Conficker can spread by infected USB drives; using current anti-virus software [5]; use Windows' own malicious software removal tool [6]; or, switch to OpenDNS [7] for your DNS service. There are many ways to try to stop these attacks, unfortunately, the bad guys are always working on getting newer and better ways to infect your system [8].

The sad truth is no matter what you do with Windows, whether you're running XP, Vista, or the Windows 7 beta, you're not safe [9]. Now, however there's a patch that will stop Conficker, and almost all other malware programs, in their tracks. It's called Linux.

To install it, you'll first need to back up all your personal data. For this specific job, I recommend copying your My Documents directories and files, bookmarks and the like to a CD, DVD, or USB drive. Once that's done, you'll need to download one of the various Linux desktop patches. I recommend any of the following: Fedora 10, openSUSE 11.1, Ubuntu 8.10 [10], Mint 6 [11], or MEPIS 8 [12].

Once you've installed your 'patch' and logged in to your new, safer desktop, you'll need to copy over your old files to your new main directory. To get your Internet Explorer bookmarks into Firefox, which will be one of your Web browser choices, follow the instructions in this mozillaZine article [13]. For Outlook, if you're using the newest version of Evolution [14], you can directly import your Outlook PST (Personal Folders) files [15]. If you prefer Thunderbird for your e-mail, these instructions [16]should see you through.

If you find you really need to run some of your old applications on your new system, CrossOver Linux [17] can be a great help. You can always find many other programs that will do the same work as your old programs [18]. For example, there's little, if anything, you can do with Microsoft Office that can't be

done with <u>OpenOffice</u> [19].

With your new Linux 'patch,' you'll soon be working as productively as ever and without any security worries. This is one 'patch,' unlike say <u>Vista SP1</u> [20], that I can completely recommend.

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