

October 23, 2014

To: AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Volunteers

From: Bonnie Speedy, VP and National Director, AARP
Foundation Tax-Aide

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Foundation Tax-Aide

Subject: CyberTax TY2014-03: Personal, Site and/or Loaned
Computers

*As of April 15, 2014, systems with the Windows XP operating system **MUST NOT** be used in the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program. This is mandatory; there will be no exceptions. It is a major security issue.*

Problem: CCH TaxWise, as well as the Microsoft Corporation that owns the operating system software, has ended support for the Windows XP operating system. This means that any computer that has an XP operating system will not receive software updates; including critical security updates. Anti-virus software and/or XP security patches are NOT sufficient to protect taxpayer data in an XP operating system.

Why this is critical: Although an XP system computer will still work, it will continue to become extremely vulnerable to security risks and viruses. These viruses can make the computer totally unusable or can load undetected software on the computer that grabs your key strokes when you are keying in taxpayer data. The taxpayer data, such as name and address and social security number, can be used by the hackers directly to steal or even sell to more sophisticated identity thieves. For victims of identity theft the consequences can last for years- causing financial problems, credit issues, benefit losses, and legal problems. We know that no volunteer would want to be responsible for giving this type of nightmare to a taxpayer who is relying on Tax-Aide for help. A

security breach would damage the good reputation of the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program and severely impact the good work that you all do.

What you need to do: We are asking you to make sure all personal, site and loaned computers that are used in the Tax-Aide program are not using the Windows XP operating system. Unless the computers are upgraded to a Windows 7 or higher operating system they must not be used for Tax-Aide purposes. They also cannot be on the same network segment as Tax-Aide computers (for example: using a Tax-Aide computer at home with personal computers that are not upgraded to Windows 7 or above).

Remember: Every hacker out there is listening to the news, and they are aware of the XP vulnerability. They are making plans to steal information that they can sell. Many are exploiting the situation even as you read this email.

The Windows XP operating system must not be used in the Tax-Aide program.

We must not take this risk with taxpayer data.

If you have questions or concerns about this message, please contact your Technology Specialists or/and State Coordinator and District Coordinator or send questions or concerns to taxaidetech@arp.org.

We thank you in advance for your assistance.