

The Computer Support Newsletter

December 2002

<http://msa.ars.usda.gov/computerhelp>

email news: hroberts@ars.usda.gov

Computer Support Newsletter Audience

A note to our many readers.....

This newsletter is published mainly to inform MSA employees of Information Technology (IT) news and happenings. Much of the newsletter will relate to the local user base. If you are NOT at Stoneville, some of the contained items may not be relevant to you.

Anti-Virus Software

Symantec Norton Enterprise Anti-Virus software has been distributed to all Mid South Area Locations. Please contact your Location/Unit Computer Specialist or Assistant for instruction on keeping your virus signatures current. Ask your computer contact to set your system up for unattended, "live updates". That's right, the program will go out to the Symantec web site and download and install the most current signature, when available, without you having to bother with it. When you get the opportunity, say, "Thanks" to our Area Director and Deputy Area Director for making the funds possible for this Area purchase.

Element K nearing the end.....

Element has extended our training contract until December 31, 2002. The \$50 a seat for three years of training was an incredible offer.

In reviewing the database of MSA training participants, employees displayed a lot of interest in training. However, most courses were not completed. Yesterday, I received the following:

- ARS as an agency is not yet convinced that eLearning is of sufficient importance to fund a renewed contract per our proposal (Geolearning Learning Management System and ElementK or other online vendor for content for one year).

- As part of the Federal eGov initiatives, USDA is moving forward with an eLearning proposal of its own.

The USDA proposal will go into a pilot phase which will take at least six months. There will be no on line training offered while the pilot project is on-going. I will keep you informed of the outcome.

We need your feedback.....

- How can we best implement a computer based training (CBT) program for our users?
- Do you include the training courses on your IDP?
- Do you feel you have buy-in from your supervisor to participate in computer based training?
- Is scheduling a problem?
- Would making a training post or Smart

Module available to provide a place away from the work station be helpful?

Please send answers and/or comments about training to elementk-msa@msa-stoneville.ars.usda.gov

Changing your FFIS/BRIO Password:

To create a new password , type in your User ID at the FFIS screen and enter a new password into the "new password" field. Re-enter it in the "verification" field. **Your password must be 8 characters long.** FFIS allows 3 attempts to correctly enter a new password, after the third attempt, the ID will be suspended."

Changing your Federal Data Warehouse (FDW) Password.

Using VersaPath, select FDW session from the VersaPath setup session screen. At the FDW Main Menu Screen, enter your ID, your password or temporary password (if the security administrator had to reset it for you) and it will prompt you to enter a new password and verify it.

Remember, your FDW password must have 8 characters **that includes at least one number.**

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Windows Tip:

What are .DLL files?

Dynamic Link Library (DLL) files are basically "support" files for certain types of software.

They are generally found in your Windows System directory.

How do they work? Let's say a program needs to perform an operation. Rather than all the coding being built into the program, it uses a particular DLL file that, with a simple call, can perform the operation for it. This saves lots of programming time, since many of the common DLL files are already installed within Windows.

Should I delete .DLL files? The best advice is "NO", since many of your DLL files are used by more than one program. Deleting the ones you "think" may not be used anymore is like opening your PC and unplugging cables that may not look important.

A good rule of thumb is to always run the "uninstall" program when deleting a program. Most programs include an uninstall program which should take out any .DLLs that you no longer need. We have found that some uninstall programs are "flaky" and do not remove registry entries and/or .DLL's. But for the most part, they successfully clean up after uninstalling a program.

Most of the time if you hit the Start button, Programs, the application listing, you can find an uninstall program. You can also click the Start, Settings, Control Panel, and open the Add/ Remove programs icon. Select the Add/Remove button. A pop-up screen will appear that give you the option to uninstall the software for you.

Operating System Recommendations

Computer support recommends the following desktop operating systems:

Windows 98 Second Edition: For Administrative office personnel who use USDA software such as timekeeping (STAR), LOTS/budgeting software, PC-PRCH, and RPMS.

The IT office continues testing Windows XP professional for use with Administrative processes. Our findings is that a boot loader needs to be installed that will allow the user to boot to the older DOS versions which do not have the hardware abstraction layer (HAL) used by WindowsXP. We believe that this is the cause of DOS incompatibility with XP operating systems.

Who do you Call?

Your local computer support person is your first point of contact for IT issues, including upgrading or replacing hardware and accessories. They can also assist you with installing new applications.

See your computer support personnel for learning how to set your PC up for automatic "critical" Windows updates. If you do not have an updated operating system, your PC and/or software applications may not function properly.

Comments and Contacts:

Comments: email your comments to:

hroberts@msa-stoneville.ars.usda.gov

Old Issues: Old issues of The Computer Support Newsletter can be found at:

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