

NORTON ANTIVIRUS 3

How serious is the risk of viral infection? If you are a SaskTel High Speed customer, virtually non-existent, but it depends a great deal on your online habits and level of knowledge. I haven't had a virus alert on any of my PCs in the past 18 months, primarily because of SaskTel's Postini service. Postini is an inline email scanner and spam trapper that is free of charge with any of SaskTel's internet services. Best of all, it doesn't run on your PC at all, it traps and eliminates threats before they ever get to your mailbox.

I do get SaskTel clients that bring in infected PCs, but that is because they download virus-infected files, either directly from websites or through chat programs. Once again, it comes down to being aware of the risks and controlling one's impulse to "get clicky with it". If you are constantly searching for freebies, you run the risk of infection and probably should be running some kind of anti-virus software.

The one thing that holds me back from uninstalling NAV 2002 on my PCs is the fact that they are all network connected, meaning that if one of the ones I don't personally use gets infected with a particular kind of virus, I could end up infected also. Admittedly, that would be a minor inconvenience for me, but not one I am willing to subject myself to. On the other hand, if I only had one standalone PC, I would probably go without anti-virus protection altogether.

So, what to use? The best all-around anti-virus software available on the market today is F-Prot. This company has been around longer than anybody else in the anti-virus business, and they haven't forgotten what it means to write lean, mean software. Other companies have better virus detection rates (including Norton's), but nobody writes software this skinny. F-Prot only uses 3 resident processes and less than 11 Mb RAM. You can optionally turn off scheduled automatic updates and drop it to only one process and 3 Mb RAM.

The company uses the same revenue model as the others; you purchase the program upfront and that includes a year's worth of free updates. The best way to get F-Prot is to go to their website, www.f-prot.com and buy it there, or you can just download a free trial to see if you like it. Not only is this software light and fast, it is probably the best deal out there. At \$29US for 5 client PCs, there is nothing else that even comes close. If you want a CD and a cardboard box you have to spend an extra 30 dollars, plus shipping.

After a year, you renew your subscription online. As with all the anti-virus manufacturers, try to resist the urge to upgrade versions, just get the subscription extended. It is rare for a new version of a program to actually add new functionality without it costing you something in system performance, as Symantec's Norton Anti-Virus has so ably shown.

For a comparison of various antivirus packages, check out the tech tips section of our website. If you have question or comments, I can always be reached via email sean@intrex.ca or join our forums at <http://intrex.ca> for more in-depth conversations.