

Safeguards Technical Assistance Memorandum Windows 2003 End of Support

Introduction

Microsoft has stated that it will end support for all Windows Server 2003 products on July 14, 2015. Therefore Microsoft will no longer provide security updates or technical support for this platform. The IRS Office of Safeguards requires that all systems that receive, process, store, and/or transmit FTI must be supported.

Risk

Computers running Windows Server 2003 will continue to work after support ends, but agencies will –

- No longer receive security patches which help protect systems from viruses, spyware, and malware
- No longer receive assisted technical support from Microsoft
- No longer receive software and content updates

Computer systems that run unsupported systems have an elevated risk to vulnerabilities that may be exploited by malware.

Safeguard Review

Agencies are expected to update Windows Server 2003 systems that receive, store, process or transmit FTI to a supported operating system. Windows Server 2003 systems still used by agencies to receive, store, process or transmit FTI after July 15, 2015 will result in a Critical finding during the Safeguard review.

Agencies that utilize Windows Server 2003 systems to receive, store, process or transmit federal tax information (FTI) must mitigate the risk of using FTI on an unsupported operating system platform by either migrating to a currently supported operating system (e.g., Windows Server 2008, Windows Server 2012), or removing all FTI from Windows Server 2003 systems and sanitizing the systems per Publication 1075 requirements prior to disposal.

Microsoft has issued migration information on its website at <http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/server-cloud/products/windows-server-2003/>.

While this memo is directed at systems that receive, store, process or transmit FTI, it is highly recommended that agencies migrate all Windows Server 2003 systems in their environment to a supported operating system due to the exposure to increased risk that Windows Server 2003 systems will pose after support from Microsoft is ended.

Please direct any questions or comments to the IRS Office of Safeguards at safeguardreports@irs.gov.