

Y2K: Harmless, or a disaster?

Solution

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by requests for Y2K information he has been receiving from the county small business community. The multi-agency presentation has already been made once at Sampson Community College, where it was met with enthusiastic response.

"This is a very collaborative effort to serve the small business community," Horton said. "I think it will meet the full array of needs."

Betty L. Gardner, manager of North Carolina State University's Computer Training Unit, will speak of training initiatives available through the university and the community college system. She will discuss needs and course offerings in response.

Jeff Eglan, of the Year 2000 Project, will speak of North Carolina's role as one of the states leading the nation in response to Y2K. He will speak of the special challenges local governments and institutions face in the millennium and state efforts to address them.

Small Business Technology Development Center director Warren Gulko will tell attendees how the Y2K will impact their businesses. Tom Jenkins, of Concurrent Technologies Corporation, will focus on a variety of issues, including the scope of the problem, its implications for business, how to prepare and where to go for assistance.

Attorney Theodore R. Harper will speak to the legal issues surrounding Y2K and explain why organizations should be concerned and how they should prepare.

Financial specialists David J. and Sandy Burger, of Computer Living

Corp. in Pinehurst, will address concerns related to electronic transfer of money and banking transactions.

Horton said the full range of services provided small businesses in Brunswick County stand to be affected by the millennium bug, if action is not taken.

"One thing the small business community is very concerned about is utilities," Horton said. "They touch virtually every aspect of our lives."

While Horton believes awareness of the Year 2000 bug is still very low among county small business operators, he hopes programs such as the one Thursday will stimulate more involvement. There are steps small business operators should be taking already to make sure they are prepared for the millennium.

"First, be sure your machines are Y2K compliant," Horton advises. "If you order inventory by computer, make sure your suppliers are compliant so you can continue to interact."

Even appliances -- microwave ovens, freezers, VCRs -- may refuse to work when the clock strikes midnight December 31, 2000.

"Embedded chips in cash registers should be checked," Horton said.

Attendance at the seminar will be limited to 80 persons. More information may be obtained by calling the Brunswick Community College Small Business Center at 253-3088.

Problem

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"98."

The problem becomes ugly when the date rolls over from "99" to

"00" on Saturday, January 1, 2000. Many older computers and embedded electronics will recognize the date not as January 1, 2000, but instead as January 1, 1900.

The confusion may result in any number of scenarios. If the processors fail to recognize the "00" as an actual value, they may get stuck in an endless loop, looking for a viable value and causing machinery and electronic systems to stop functioning. Or, systems may recognize the value as 1900 or some other previous date (many default to 1980) and wreak havoc on electronic billing systems and time management systems which run continuously and rely on accurate dates and times to function properly.

Although the specifics of the problem are isolated in the technology, the effects of the problem will spread to all facets of our society:

- The government has already issued statements that specific divisions of the executive branch of the government will not be compliant by January, 2000

- Leading economists such as Dr. Edward Yardeni are predicting a 60-percent chance of economic recession as a result of business failures after the year 2000.

- Electric power utilities that rely on the nuclear power industry and embedded technology may collapse under the strain of computer failure and federal shutdowns.

- Transportation and communication systems may fail due to the prominence of embedded microchips in satellites and scheduling systems.

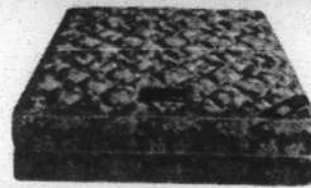
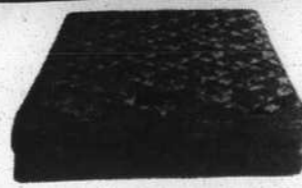
Obviously, the year 2000 problem has the potential to critically affect our worldwide society in a number of concrete ways. Analysts have predicted varied results of the problem, ranging from a non-event to total economic collapse of the planet.

Although the outcome of the problem is uncertain, the problem itself is very real. It is up to each of us to remain informed and educated about the problem, and to be prepared for the possibilities that may become realities.

Source: Y2K News Magazine

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