

### **Daylight Saving Time Change**

Congress had decided to change the start and end date of daylight saving time to save energy. The start date is about two weeks earlier (March 11 instead of April 1 this year), and the end date is about two weeks later. This change can cause minor problems in your computer if it is not handled properly. If you have Windows XP with Service Pack 2, there is no problem as the system will take care of it. You can find out if you have this configuration by right-clicking on My Computer and selecting Properties. Otherwise, you can change the time manually by going to Start>Control Panel>Date and time. Or, you can just ignore it and nothing bad will happen. The same situation will occur in the Fall because daylight savings time will last longer than usual.

### **Technology leaps ahead**

Technology continues to leap ahead at a tremendous rate. Many traditional functions are moving to the Internet. Telephone service is moving to the web, as are TV and radio. CDs are disappearing, replaced by iPod-like devices, each of which can hold 50 CDs in a device the size of a credit card. Flash memories are memory devices the size of a package of gum which plug into a USB port for data storage or transfer in sizes up to four gigabytes. A one gigabyte flash memory cost \$70 a year ago: now it is \$18. A PC that four years ago was a top-end machine selling for \$1200 can now be purchased for \$400.

The long-awaited Vista operating system from Microsoft is now available, a year behind schedule. It has improved security, multimedia, and anti-phishing features, along with a flashy visual appearance. Four versions are available:

- Vista Home Basic      \$100
- Vista Home Premium \$130
- Vista Business        \$160
- Vista Ultimate        \$200

If you are already running XP, I see little value in purchasing the Vista upgrade. If you buy a new computer, it will come with Vista. Late this year, computers will come with built-in flash memory that will speed the startup process, improve performance, and increase battery life in laptops.

### **External USB disks**

A device that has recently become much more affordable is the external USB disk. This is a storage unit that plugs into a USB port and acts like another system disk. No installation is required on Windows XP. You can purchase a 100 gigabyte USB disk for about \$60 (down from \$140 a year ago). It is excellent for increasing disk storage and backups.

### **Freeze monitor**

I took my own device and purchased a freeze monitor from Amazon (a Control Products Intermediate Freeze Alarm). It was easy to set up, and it reports problems with temperature and electric power. I set the temperature alarm for 55 degrees and the

electricity outage at 60 minutes. I tested it by removing the power. Sixty minutes later, it dutifully dialed the three phone numbers I had put into it and reported that the power had been off for 60 minutes. When we are gone we can call in and get a report of the temperature and power status. It gives peace of mind when we are gone for long periods of time.

### **New GPS devices**

Recent GPS devices were either portable for use in hiking, or powered by a cigarette lighter outlet for use in a car. Now, there are new devices that combine both features. They are portable for use outside of the car, but have all of the features of an in-car navigation unit with comprehensive street maps for North America. They have built-in photo viewers and will also play MP3 music through its built-in speaker or headphones. An example is the Garmin Nuvi 350 which sells for about \$380.

### **Global Warming**

A volunteer committee called “Hudson Area Climate Action Network” has recently been formed to advocate action to reduce global warming and encourage conservation. You can get on their mailing list by sending mail to Denise Frizzell at [deniseaf@verizon.net](mailto:deniseaf@verizon.net).