Google Chrome OS may be security hot spot in 2010

Written by ph0bYx
Tuesday, 05 January 2010 20:18 -

Gregg Keizer, ComputerWorld.com
Google Inc.`s Chrome OS will be ˝poked˝ by hackers in 2010, in large part because it will be the ˝new kid on the block,˝ a security researcher predicted today.

Chrome OS will be targeted by attackers, probably even before it`s officially released, said Sam Masiello, the director of threat management at antivirus vendor McAfee Inc.

˝It`ll be the new kid on the block, that`s one of the primary drivers why we think cybercriminals will target Chrome OS,˝ said Masiello. ˝The same thing happened to Windows Vista and Windows 7, even before they were finished. Since Chrome OS is new, it`s going to be of interest to security researchers, and it`s going to be poked by cybercriminals as well.˝

Google`s operating system was announced in July and released as open-source in November, but is not slated to be available on netbooks until late in 2010.

Another reason hackers will likely target Chrome OS is its reliance on HTML 5, the still-unfinished revision of HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) that aims to replace the current crop of rich media plug-ins, such as Adobe Flash and Microsoft`s Silverlight, with advanced features developers can build right into sites.

HTML 5 also supports offline Web applications, where traditionally online services and software can be accessed when users are not connected to the Internet. ˝As we move toward the advent of rich Internet applications, the lines are blurring between online and offline,˝ said Masiello. ˝Cybercriminals will be able to attack users when they`re offline, as well as on.˝

Other Google software will make a name for itself -- and not in a good way -- during the coming year, said Masiello. Google Wave, the search giant`s collaboration and communication software, may be the perfect tool for controlling a botnet, or collection of already-compromised computers.

˝Google Wave uses XMPP (eXtensible Messaging and Presence Protocol), which provides application-to-application control for Web apps,˝ Masiello said. ˝It could be used for truly decentralized command-and-control of a botnet, so a take-down of a single ISP or hosting company would have zero impact.˝

But although McAfee sounded the alarm about Chrome OS, HTML 5 and Google Wave, Masiello acknowledged that 2010 will probably be limited to proof-of-concept exploits or a low level of activity, seeing as how Chrome won`t appear until later in the year and HTML 5 is still unfinished. ˝With HTML5 and Google, we still have some time,˝ he said.

McAfee`s 2010 security predictions can be downloaded from the company`s site (download PDF   ).