VETERANS VOICE

Winnebago County Department of Veterans Services Newsletter

October 2023

Fixing Software Bugs One Update At A Time

Software has become an integral part of our rapidly evolving technological lives. It powers our digital world, from your smartphones and computers to smart home devices and business applications. However, with the convenience and efficiency software brings, one critical aspect often gets overlooked: keeping your software updated.

Software updates are essential, as they offer a range of benefits that contribute to security, good user experiences and overall well-being. The following are just a few ways software updates are important:

- **Security and privacy**: Keeping software updated helps protect Veterans' devices and data against cyber threats, reducing the risk of identity theft, fraud and unauthorized access to health care and benefits.
- **Bug fixes**: Updates address bugs, glitches and performance issues in software that can cause minor annoyances or significant disruptions in functionality. Staying up to date ensures your software operates smoothly and efficiently.
- **Access to benefits and resources**: Veterans rely on VA technologies to conveniently access their benefits and health care information. Regular software updates ensure these platforms function smoothly and securely when you need them.

> **"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."**
>
> **- Maya Angelou**

In This Issue

Continued…

- **Access to government services:** Veterans often interact with other government websites, too, for benefits and useful information. Frequent software updates enhance the user experience for Veterans, ensuring they can access the services you expect and deserve.
- **Financial Management:** Updated software ensures Veterans have accurate calculations, timely alerts and improved security for financial transactions.
- **Career Opportunities:** Veterans transitioning into civilian careers may rely on job search platforms, resume builders and interview preparation software. Keeping these tools updated maximizes the chances of finding suitable employment opportunities.

While updating software might seem minor, it carries significant implications. It's a proactive measure that safeguards Veteran data, enhances user experience and keeps Veterans aligned with the latest innovations. VA is committed to helping by providing Veterans with resources and tools to improve security so you can access services more conveniently.

By frequently updating devices and applications, you can reduce your vulnerability to losing sensitive information and compromising access to personal accounts. Each installed update marks a step toward a seamless and more efficient digital journey. The next time you receive an "Update Available" notification, embrace it - you're taking a crucial stride towards a stronger and more resilient digital presence.

A Cybersecurity Checklist
Taking a few of these proactive steps can help safeguard you from cybercriminals.
- **Lock Down Your Login**. One of the first things everyone needs to do is to ensure that passphrases for each account are lengthy, unique, and safely stored. Enable 2-factor authentication on all accounts that offer it.
- **Update Your Software.** Don't postpone critical software updates. This is one of the easiest ways to protect your data.
- **Back It Up.** Protect your data by making copies - or backups - of your most important files. Use the 3-2-1 rule to help guide you: 3 backup copies, 2 different media types, 1 offline, and in a separate location.

OCTOBER IS CYBER SECURITY AWARENESS MONTH

National Cybersecurity Awareness Month

This October marks the 20th anniversary of National Cybersecurity Awareness Month (NCSAM), a collaborative initiative between the government and private industry aimed at advocating for safe and secure online practices.

Over the past two decades, our cyber footprint has evolved rapidly. Devices - and the people who use them - are everywhere, and security and vigilance are paramount. Digital trust, or confidence in the security of our online interactions, is the backbone of the connected world.

Following are four steps that every consumer can take to protect their cyber footprint:
1) Enabling multi-factor authentication (MFA)
2) Using strong passwords
3) Keeping software up to date
4) Recognizing and reporting phishing

Be mindful of the responsibility to stay vigilant, adapt to emerging threats and prioritize cybersecurity to better foster digital trust.

Protect Your G.I. Bill Benefits From Scams

Unfortunately, some educational institutions and programs use misleading practices and overpromise their degrees' value and earning power. Without knowing the warning signs to protect yourself, this could lead to a depletion of your education benefits.

VA wants to ensure Veterans are informed when using their G.I. Bill benefits and to help them make the best education decisions. We encourage Veterans and their beneficiaries to know these education fraud warning signs and the best practices to avoid falling victim to a scam.

What are the types of scams targeting your education benefits?
- Job scams. Job Boards or Advertisements targeting specific demographics may be misleading or fake and require you to ` give personal information or money to get a job. You can find free, official information about federal jobs at USAJOBS.gov, FedHiresVets.gov, and CareerOneStop.org. Your state's Department of Labor may have job listings, contacts for local job offices, and resources for counseling and referrals.
- Student loan scams. Educational institutions may promise immediate student loan forgiveness or debt cancellation to entice Veterans to enroll in classes. For most borrowers, loan forgiveness is only available through programs requiring many years of qualifying payments or other qualifying criteria. Here is a list of Student Debt Relief "Do's and Don'ts" to help borrowers avoid scams.
- Scholarship scams. Educational institutions may "guarantee" Veterans a scholarship in exchange for a redemption/processing fee.
- Seminars. Veterans may be promised a scholarship and financial aid under the guise of high-pressure sales pitches where they feel pressured to pay a fee immediately or risk losing the so-called "opportunity."
- Free gifts. Veterans may be promised incentives such as free laptops, gift cards or other "freebies" for enrolling in courses.

How can you protect your education benefits?
- Choose G.I. Bill approved schools. Use the WEAMS Institution Search Tool to find G.I. Bill approved schools.
- Use the G.I. Bill Comparison Tool. Compare the benefits you'll receive at different schools.
- Learn about the Principles of Excellence Program. This program requires schools that receive federal funding through programs such as the G.I. Bill to follow certain guidelines.
- Check out the National Resource Directory Database. This database provides validated resources that support recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration for service members, Veterans, family members and caregivers. Scammers may try to appear legitimate by using official sounding names, logos, websites or showcasing a false affiliation with VA.
- Find schools that take part in the Yellow Ribbon Program, which can help you pay for school costs not covered by the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill.

VA recognizes the importance of professional growth and training for a meaningful career after your service to your country. If you suspect you are a victim of fraud, please contact the VA Office of Inspector General at VAOIG Hotline. You may also file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission by visiting reportfraud.ftc.gov. If you miss a VA benefits payment, identify a discrepancy in payments, or find suspicious activity with your direct deposit account, contact VA immediately at 1-800-827-1000.

Upcoming Event

Join American Legion Cook Fuller Post 70 & Congress Field, Historic Jackson and Bent Woods Neighborhood Associations

4th Annual

Safe Halloween!

Meet neighbors. Have fun!

5-7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 31

American Legion Post 70
1332 Spruce St. Oshkosh

Treats, games, prizes, balloon artist, Whisper Hills animals and more... ALL FREE!!!