

## Is your computer ready?

Follow the steps below to find out how a computer will react to the year 2000.

■ **STEP 1:** Set the computer's clock to a couple minutes before midnight Dec. 31, 1999.

■ **STEP 2:** Turn the machine off, wait a few minutes, then turn it back on and check the clock for the new year.

■ **STEP 3:** If it's wrong, reset the clock to 2000, turn it off, and then restart to see if the new date holds.

■ **STEP 4:** If the year is still incorrect, contact the computer's manufacturer for a patch or upgrade.

Keep in mind that the Y2K problem is not a serious concern unless you run programs that depend on a correct date, such as spreadsheets or databases.

For more information about Y2K and its possible solutions, visit these Web sites:

[www.ous.edu/y2k/](http://www.ous.edu/y2k/) — This Oregon University System site has links to many state and higher education resources

[www.microsoft.com/year2000/](http://www.microsoft.com/year2000/) — The official Microsoft Y2K resource center

[www.s390.ibm.com/stories/faq2000.html](http://www.s390.ibm.com/stories/faq2000.html) — IBM answers some basic questions about Y2K's origin and possible effects

[millennia-bcs.com/emb-link.htm#ecs](http://millennia-bcs.com/emb-link.htm#ecs) — Links to information about embedded systems

[www.faa.gov/y2k/](http://www.faa.gov/y2k/) — The FAA answers questions about Y2K and its air traffic control systems

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## Y2K: Some microchips may need replacements

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"The new version of BANNER that we're installing Labor Day weekend should be compliant, according to our vendor," Hilton said.

According to Hilton, some people have suggested taking the three administrative servers offline for a day in order to test their capacity to handle dates past 1999, but she said that wouldn't be possible because it would interrupt the current flow of production, perhaps causing even more problems.

"The ideal would be if we had an exact replica of our system with all the hardware and software. But we don't," Hilton said.

Because most of University Computing's Y2K resources are dedicated to examining mission-critical systems, the responsibility for fixing any other campus computers will be deployed to departments and individuals.

However, Hilton said the regular lines of support through microcomputing consulting and the help desk are always available. "We're also working on setting up pointers on the University Web site to information about step-by-step things people can do," she said.

Several campus-related organizations have already taken steps to ensure computer problems don't hinder their work in the new millennium.

The Alumni Association and the University Foundation, which keep their records in a common database, rely heavily on dates in order to arrange class reunions or conduct targeted fund-raising campaigns.

However, the valuable records are safe from any Y2K problems, said Donald Healey, manager of information systems/hardware for the University of Oregon Foundation.

"All of our systems are based on date algorithms that are unaffected by the year 2000," Healey said.

For example, a certain date is set as the number "0" and all other dates are calculated mathematically as a positive or negative number in relation to that original base date, Healey said. As a result, none of the information in the organization's database needs to interact with the computer's internal clock.

The Oregon Daily Emerald has also worked to prevent any com-

puter problems that might threaten publication in the next century. "Our editorial and production systems are not going to have any problems," said Michele Ross, production manager. "We use Macintoshes, which have always been year-2000-compliant."

The Emerald's business office, however, which is responsible for billing advertisers and maintaining the paper's payroll, uses PCs. According to business supervisor Kathy Carbone, the Emerald switched to a new accounting system last year because the old one could not handle dates beyond 1999.

One aspect of the Y2K problem that people often overlook is something called "embedded systems."

"Embedded systems affect everything from VCRs to toasters to those coffee machines that automatically start your coffee in the morning," said Jody Bleisch, systems coordinator for the Office of Public Safety.

According to Bleisch, some microchips in electronic devices have the same Y2K problem that computers do, but there is almost no way to fix it except by individually testing and replacing each chip. "It's not something you have access to reprogram," he said.

It's possible that embedded systems chips are used in things on campus from lighting to security systems to fire control boxes. For security reasons, Bleisch would not discuss exactly which campus systems might be affected. But he did say the problem is being carefully examined.

"As far as all of our critical systems — security and fire — we've looked at Y2K compliance," he said. Bleisch said most of the newer systems wouldn't be affected.

"In the past 10 years, most manufacturers have been aware of the problem. You won't see a lot of [the older systems] out there. They're obsolete," Bleisch said.

Some older systems the University uses will still function, Bleisch said, but show the wrong date, such as dispatch logs. "We're going to use them to their life's extent. Their non-compliance is not critical," he said.

"There just has to be a common understanding that someone didn't enter a certain building 100 years ago."

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