

Mounds View computers are clear but cost of virus isn't

The virus left no lasting damage, but school officials are still calculating the financial toll and trying to find out the cause.

By [NORMAN DRAPER](#), Star Tribune

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Mounds View schools' 3,500 computers are all up and running after a virus hit last month, but the district is still taking precautions with the system and adding up the bill.

The virus, which struck Feb. 10, shut down the district's servers and affected such computerized services as teacher e-mails, online homework logs, attendance and student lunch accounts. As of last week, the computers were cured of the virus.

Nick Temali, district director of community education and technology, said the virus, known officially as W32.VIRUT.CF and unofficially as "Downandup" and "Conficker," left no lasting damage, other than to result in the erasure of some staff members' computer bookmarks and favorites.

District officials don't know the financial toll of the fix and are working with their insurance company.

"In the first two weeks alone we had 550 hours of overtime, 65 hours of temporary help we brought in and 45 hours of consulting help," Temali said.

Two days after the virus showed up, Temali said, district officials figured they had no way to clean up the mess and had to "wipe out everything on the hard drive" and start over again.

Technicians checked every computer, fixing the staff computers first, then finally finishing up with the laptops last week. Many of the student computers could be scanned and cleaned of the virus, Temali said. A number -- mostly student computers -- were not infected. Even the computers not infected eventually will be shut down and reformatted.

"This virus did nothing to destroy or compromise any of the data in our systems," Temali said. What it did do was make many computers impossible to operate.

District technicians don't know how the virus wormed its way into district computers.

"We have heard or seen that a person did something as simple as a Google search, and downloaded something and got the virus," Temali said. "We may have gotten it on a flash drive," a small, portable device used to copy data from a computer.

Temali said the same virus hit Spring Lake Park and Sartell schools. Nationwide, it is reputed to have wreaked havoc in the Houston court system and a major insurance company and affected 9 million computers in all. One Mounds View student who had been using a flash drive to get data off district computers plugged the drive in at home and shut down two home computers.

District technicians have "frozen" district computers so that teachers and staff members can't download software from the Internet without first getting permission from the district technology help desk. Technicians then check out the software, make sure it's properly licensed and "thaw" out the computer temporarily so the software can be downloaded. The computer is then refrozen.

The district banned the use of flash drives for three weeks, while the computers were being reformatted, Temali said. They were once again allowed last week after the district installed antivirus software that can scan the data on flash drives for viruses before the information is opened up into computers.

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