

Internet Security: more countries join IE warning

The governments of France and Australia have joined those who are warning that Internet Explorer is unsafe in its unpatched state. So has New Zealand. But the UK, reportedly, has decided not to do so. But some of the recommended alternatives might cause some users frustration.

Governments that are issuing warnings are recommending that users choose Firefox or Google Chrome.

Chrome has been getting a lot of press recently: in December it passed Apple's Safari to become the second most downloaded browser after Firefox - which now claims more than 445 million downloads.

But users of Chrome and Safari might find themselves frustrated. Chrome is built on the Safari core, and that core does not implement web standards fully.

One of the standards it does not fully operate is the handling of meta-data; as such it does not process commands contained in Metatags.

These are commonly used by web designers to divert or refresh pages. There are many good reasons why sites do this, in particular those that have a splash-screen that auto-advances after a short period, or those that keep all visitor-accessible data in a specific directory other than route. Although there are other methods of doing this - notably using Javascript - they are less concise and therefore add to the size of files.

Because divert and refresh don't work, many sites will not be accessible.

Some users, particularly those using Apple Mac, complain that sites "only work with Windows" when, in fact, it's their browser that's at fault.

Firefox, Opera and K-Meleon all properly implement metadata and the tags function as intended.