

By ~~March 2008~~ March 2008, Editor, Software Reviews

Shield Up

Detect the possible risks on your computer

Monitoring your own computer activity offers in many cases an additional protection layer to your system. Malware and all sorts of parasites that are trying to install on your computer can be prevented from doing their bidding before precious information is leaked out of your computer. Arovax Shield stands out among the freeware available in this category of interest due to its design and ease of use. It is not a complicated tool at all and it's in fact a very simple instrument that provides more or less protection. The application can be configured to run on automatic pilot and take the decisions without asking you or manual and in this case, you should expect pop-ups of the program asking if you allow a certain change in the settings of a certain program or not. The minimalist interface is WYSIWYG and there are no hidden advanced options. The four tabs of the menu supply all the basic functions you need for proactive protection. The lever in the top right hand corner of the application window activates and shuts down the shield's protection. The first tab is Log and it'll display all the activity recorded since the start of Arovax Shield. During our testing, the program successfully blocked the activity of a number of tracking cookies. The report shows the user all changes that were attempted and the action taken by Arovax. The action can be set from Protection dialog. The response of the program when certain changes are "noticed" in the registry depends entirely on the user. All changes in the configuration of the registry can be automatically blocked or you can set Arovax to pose a question regarding the action vis-à-vis a certain activity. Choosing the last option can hinder your activity on the computer as you will be asked for permission every time a change is about to take place. These decisions can be added to the rules of the firewall so that you won't be asked the same question regarding the same action one time too many. The protection offered by Arovax Shield covers IE hijacks, blocking browser extensions, blocking tracking cookies (from the three web browsers supported: IE, Firefox and Opera), blocking auto start sections, executable file associations, guarding hosts files, guarding startup folders and Windows policies. If you are a beginner, then Arovax is a good first step for you as it is stupidly easy to use and offers no customization whatsoever. The Settings of the program allow the user to automatically start with Windows, enable the downloading of the online news (useful option if you are using a feed reader) and log saving options: auto-save and clean them after a user defined time. The rules are added as programs are modifying the registry or are trying to connect to the Internet. During our testing, Arovax posed absolutely no obstacle when it came to sending messages to a certain server on the Internet. So it proved to be leaky and allowed transmission of data outside our network behind our backs. On the other hand, Arovax managed to detect some changes in the registry at starting Internet Explorer. Before blocking the changes, I checked the "Create rule and remember my choice" option. The rule has been preserved and I was no longer asked the same question again. That was when using IE, but when opening Mozilla Firefox, there was absolutely no sign of activity from part of Arovax. The application could be geared for IE, but as most of you already know, the threat level is much lower when using Firefox or any other not IE based engine browser. **The Good** Very easy to use application. It is aimed at the beginner user and it does a great job. Very light on RAM usage. Manages to protect you by detecting the stealthy malware attempting to install on your computer and compromise it. **The Bad** Arovax Shield fails to alert you in any way if there are leaks from your computer. Other than this little issue, there is absolutely nothing wrong with the application. **The Truth** I would give it a try if I were you. It is free and does not interfere with any firewall or anti virus software you may have installed. The low resource usage and the silent monitoring make it almost invisible. Arovax Shield will monitor and detect any change in your registry and block it or allow it, according to your settings. *Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*