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of Service Pack #1.

Those who have the automatic updating feature selected will begin to see it download later today. Others, including system administrators who need to use their own update schedule, will need to manually download the update from the Microsoft Download Center.

Don't expect any visible changes. Most of the updates are to the system itself to make it run a little faster. And of course, the innumerable security updates and patches that you should have already installed just to keep pace. But for those who wait to upgrade their operating system until after the first Service Pack can look to do so... after tax season.

In other news, Microsoft has announced the Release Candidate of its Internet Explorer 9. This is the version that will be the final release — unless they discover a bug that still needs working out. But it has all of the features of the final product, and I've been running it for a short time now. Here's the run-down. It is noticeably faster than previous versions, but more difficult to use if you are accustomed to them. More difficult mainly because, in the style of its competitors, it has eliminated some of the menu bars at the top of the page in order to make the web page window larger. Call me a curmudgeon, but I find this inconvenient. While I have used Firefox and generally like it (Don't even mention Chrome, which is a browser only for those who like to have their every move on the Internet logged by Google and sold to advertisers.), I found the old IE easy to use. I set up the menu and favorites bars and use them constantly, so having them hidden somewhere else on the page in an annoyance. Likewise the "tabbed web pages," which are clumsy and not easy to navigate. Ditto the fact that you can't browse privately by default, as you can in Firefox. All in all, while Microsofts will no doubt slobber all over themselves for the release of IE9, I plan to go back to IE8. Or switch to Firefox permanently. IE9 is a serious issue for Microsoft. While the company holds about 80 percent of the browser market, that is not the case worldwide. In Europe, where the EU demanded

that Microsoft take its browser out of the operating system, its market share has

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why they don't work harder to make it more appealing rather than just trying to copy features I don't like in other browsers. And in the mean time, FireFox 4 is ready to go, and version 5 is just around the corner. Maybe Microsoft should just buy Netscape and adopt Firefox as its browser.

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