Single Product Review

Safe'N'Sec Personal

Tested Product

Safe'N'Sec Personal

Website & Information

The S.N.Safe&Software website (www.safensoft.com) has been designed coherently and structured clearly. S.N.Safe&Software makes an aesthetically elegant presentation of its logo, Safe'n'Sec, on the top of the page using a small Flash animation. Despite the well-designed graphical appearance, attention is still primarily drawn to the main contents of the web page. The layout is reproduced correctly by all prevalent browsers and also permits essential navigation with the help of a screen reader. Thus, access to the products and support is ensured even for the physically disabled and the page is barrier-free.

The homepage is aligned in its structure from the top to the bottom. The design is universal, which means that even inexperienced users should be able to reach their destination quickly and easily. The page is multilingual, whereby the actual contents are aligned with the requirements of the respective language or the target location, and thus, are not identical in all languages. Language selection is simple using a dropdown box at the top right corner of the page. The search box is located directly beside it, with the help of which you can search the entire page using keywords. There is a wide banner with the company logo and a slogan directly below this control box.

The main menu is spread across the entire width of the page below this, which is very clearly displayed with its 7 entries. Nevertheless, no significant access options are omitted, and apart from the menu options "Products", "Support" and "Promo actions", there are also other useful entries such as "Partners", "Press centre", "Useful info' and "About us". If you click on a menu option, the sub-menu with other selection options appears very clearly on the left side.

The first two menu options (Products and Support) provide the majority of the site visitors immediately with what they need in order to download the product, Safe'n'Sec Personal, and to test it free of charge. There are different variants available here depending on the area of application (home use or corporate solution). You can test all products free of charge or purchase them directly in website's online shop. You must register provisionally only for the Enterprise Suite. We would like to enumerate on the "support" option in some detail shortly owing to its significance.

Apart from the two most important menu options, "Products" and "Support", there is also the "Partners" option, which not only lists the business associates but also contains an entire list of the current distribution partners. The option "Press centre" displays less surprisingly but, at the same time, more

interestingly, all innovations and events related to S.N. Safe&Software.

The option, "Useful info", actually provides some useful information for private users and system administrators. Among others, you will find a security guide for the computer as well as other useful articles and test reports.

The option "About us" contains all details regarding the corporate profile and history, information for investors, and, naturally, all contact information regarding the Russian head office and the American subsidiary.

Before purchasing the software package, you should, however, browse the last menu option, "Promo actions", since this is where certain promotional offers are announced. Thus, there is the "Christmas sale" in the last entry, in which 20% discount is granted on the products, Safe'n'Sec Personal and Safe'n'Sec Deluxe.

At this juncture, as mentioned previously, we would like to provide details on the Support option, which, in our opinion, is very important both for product testers and users of the licensed version.

Support

At S.N.Safe&Software, the support function is divided into the groups, FAQ, HelpDesk and queries to the technical support team. In addition to this, there are guidelines on the right side for installation and use, as well as brief information regarding what is new compared to the previous version.
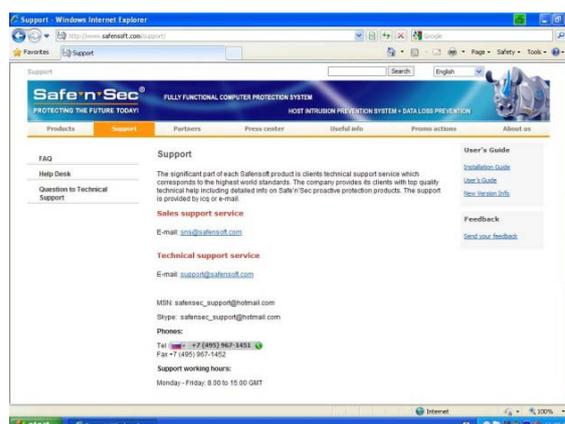
Two key e-mail addresses are given directly on the support – page, namely those of the Sales department and the technical support team respectively. In addition to this, apart from various telephone numbers, even an MSN and a Skype contact are specified, with which you can get in touch with the right people more quickly.

The FAQ list has been structured in a classical manner and contains the most frequently asked questions and their answers for various matters.

The HelpDesk is somewhat more conducive for getting what you need, since you can at least search here in a more targeted manner. At present, there do not appear to be very many topics in the database, which would, of course, definitely change with the passage of time.

There is a query form available in case you would like to post a query directly to the technical support team. Unfortunately, you have to divulge your serial number and contact information here in any case, which is somewhat of a hindrance to posting a simple query.

You would be looking for live support or a chat system in vain, which, however, in our opinion, should actually be a standard feature in today's times.

Proactive Protection

Safe'n'Sec technology **VIPO** (Valid Inside Permitted Operations – technology) combines adaptive profiling, sandboxing, and a behavior-based rules engine to deliver dynamic, proactive application integrity.

VIPO technology employs stable hashing algorithms and allows authorized users to control file and registry activity, as well as to ensure system file and installed application integrity, and only permits the execution of applications that are known to be trustworthy a priori.

Based on system function call interception at the operating system kernel (Ring 0) level, and loaded ahead of all other applications, **VIPO** identifies, analyzes, and, when necessary, blocks access to file system and registry objects, application execution, and other network activities that have the potential to impact application integrity. By operating from the core of the computer outwards, **VIPO** creates a wall around the heart of the PC to prevent the execution of harmful code.

Preventing the execution of unidentified code attempting to infiltrate the operating system is accomplished by the creation of an isolated environment – or sandbox – in which to safely execute the code without impacting any other part of the computer. In practical terms, this means that malware cannot access the operating system, permitted applications, or to install other potentially harmful code.

A versatile rules engine enables administrators to explicitly identify which actions are to be blocked under what circumstances. Additional conditions that may influence a system's behavior include, for instance, the time or frequency of the action analyzed. Beyond these basic rules, meta rules can be applied that define the analysis algorithm itself and the system response to various application actions during certain time periods.

The rule base comprises two parts: system rules which cannot be modified and custom rules that can be created to meet specific requirements.

System rules are created and continually maintained by S.N. Safe&Software's engineers. These rules are designed to protect the operating system and well-known applications from known and unknown threats and conform to standard system operations. These rules form a foundation for the development of a comprehensive rule set customized to the individual organization's requirements.

Custom rules are defined by a user or a system administrator and are designed to protect less-common or custom applications and privileged information. Custom rules are generally linked to corporate security policies and form part of the security enforcement and auditing process. A powerful and intuitive graphical user interface, built around the concepts of trusted applications and data confidentiality, is provided to assist in the development of these rules.

Downloading the trial version

Thus, all important functions of the homepage can be called up easily and we now turn to procuring a test version of the Safe'n'Sec Personal software package.

We click on "Products" and selected the required product for our test, "Safe'n'Sec Personal", from those displayed there. In order to download the 30 days trial version you must specify your e-mail address. The actual download link appears only after doing so.

Our test system

In order to get as meaningful a result as possible, we consciously used a somewhat older Dell business machine for this test.

The computer was a Dell Optiplex having an Intel Pentium 4 CPU with 3 GHz and 1 GB RAM. The Operating System used was an English version of Windows XP Pro with Service pack 3, in which we had installed all updates available so far. It goes without saying that the system was set up completely new in order to avoid the inclusion of any old malicious software.


Installation

We saved the trial version on our desktop and then began the actual installation by double clicking on the setup file. The setup contained only 5 steps, and was completed within about 1 minute.
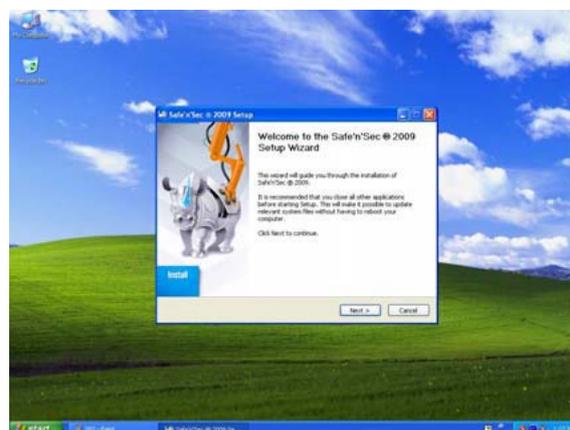
You can select the language to be used for the installation in the first step itself. Setup then welcomes you in the second step and gives a brief introduction to what you are actually installing on your system. Clicking on "Next" displays the "License Agreement", which you naturally have to accept.

Setup then inquires about the destination folder in which the program shall be installed. Since the appropriate folder path is displayed as usual, we can commence with the installation without any further interruptions. After a short pause, we can complete the setup process by clicking on "Finish". Fortunately, it is not necessary to restart the system.
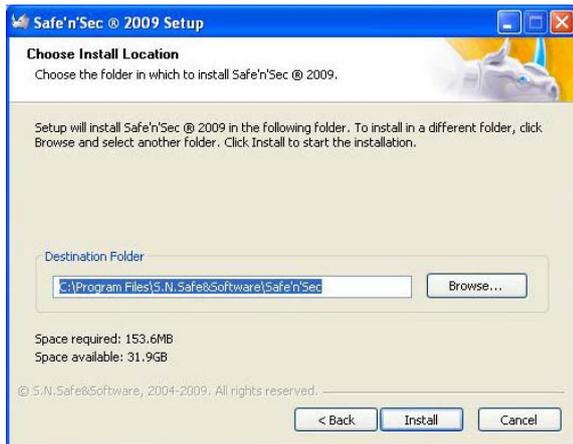
Instead, an unassuming window is displayed at the bottom right corner of the screen, which indicates that we are not yet protected and that we must execute the automatic setup program.

We click on the window, and thus open the "Control Panel" of Safe'n'Sec. This is where we find the warning once again, indicating that we have not yet executed the automatic setup, and a button that is provided to initiate the same.

Thus, we click on "Run" and the program starts executing, first to update itself and then to configure a few basic settings for our system. As soon as all this is over, the program displays a clear summary to inform us of the setup having been completed.

To sum it up, you can say that the installation gets completed with very few steps and both quickly and reliably. What leaves a good impression in our minds is also the fact that the program, subsequent to installation, draws our attention to the fact that the setup program needs to be executed and also performs all necessary updates during the setup process. This should probably be in the interest of the average user and his or her security.

First few steps / Configuration

Since we already have the "Control Panel" open, let us quickly browse the other 4 menu options available.
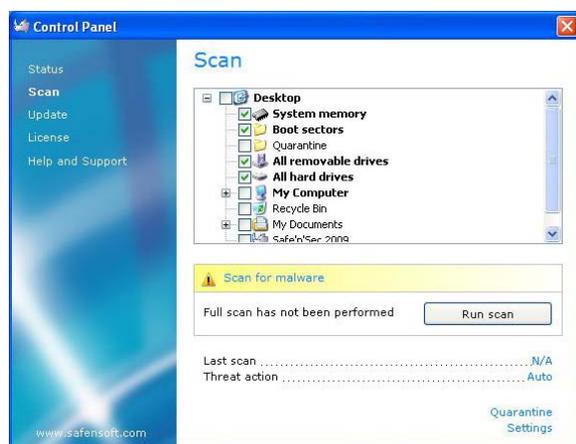
In the "Scan" tab, you can manually scan the system for malware. There are various areas depicted clearly here, such as, for example, the system memory, boot sectors, all replaceable media, all fixed media, etc., which you can specifically select for the scan. By default, all potentially endangered areas are selected and you only need to click on the button, "Run scan". Since we have just set up and installed our system, obviously nothing would be unearthed by running a test scan. Scanning can be aborted at any point of time and you can then call up other details for display.

The "Update" tab contains all important details regarding recent updates as well as a button to initiate update manually. Since we have already installed all updates just a little while ago during the execution of the automatic setup, we obviously do not find any other updates to be installed. A small link at the bottom of the window, however, enables us to configure other settings such as the proxy server and the time point for carrying out automatic updates. It is, in fact, recommended to perform updates daily, but the default setting is weekly.

In the "License" tab you will find all important information regarding your own software license, which is self-explanatory. Since we have been issued a separate license number by the software manufacturer for our test, we used this opportunity to enter this license information. By clicking on the "Activate" button, the program verifies the serial number on the central server. Miscellaneous information pertaining to our license contains the time period of the license validity in addition to the type of license and the components enabled. There was another link further down in the window to the software license agreement and the option to purchase another / a new license.

The last, but definitely highly important, menu option is "Help and Support". Here, at the very outset, the currently installed version number and that of the host Operating System is displayed, presumably with the purpose of having this important information handy in the event of need for support. Below this, there are a few links to the internal help file, the internal FAQ list, the online HelpDesk and the offline /online Help form. We know at least the last of these from the description of the homepage.

We now close the "Control Panel" again and proceed with further configuration and / or handling of the program.

You can access all important functions of Safe'n'Sec either via the tray icon in the start bar or via the context menus of Windows File Explorer.
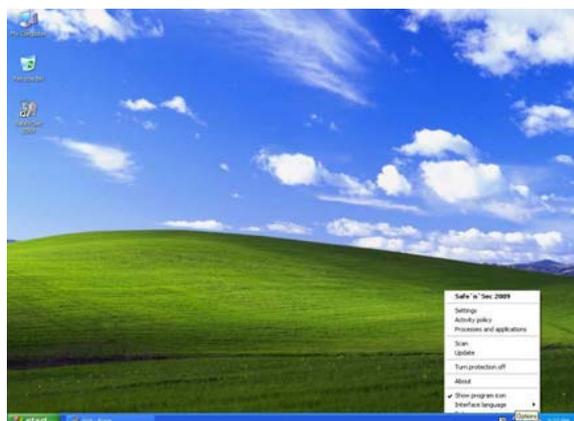
The icon in the tray represents the rhino logo of the company and is, thus, very easy to identify. Clicking on it with the right mouse button opens the associated tray menu and provides the following options: Settings (opens the settings window), Activity policy (opens a window to configure the privileges), Process and applications (opens a window with a list containing the names of all programs and process that are currently active), Scan (starts the scan for malware), Update (starts the update process), Turn off protection (as the name suggests, this option disables all protective features accompanied with musical support), About (opens a window that displays the current program version), Show program icon (with this you can conceal the tray icon if you wish to disguise the software), Interface Language (you can use this to change the preferred language for the program directly with the help of a click), and the option Exit, which ends the software package.

You can configure all settings to control the behavior of the Safe'n'Sec Personal in the "Settings" window and also view and modify various parameters to control the activities, scans, updates and service settings. However, as a layman you should not tamper with these settings at least initially, since the computer appears to be adequately protected, at least in our opinion, using the default settings.

We would also recommend the same for the settings, "Activity policy" and "Processes and applications", since these settings would not be easily coherent for the inexperienced user, and you could then either cause the security cover provided by Safe'n'Sec Personal to be compromised or you could configure the software too stringently or incorrectly, which, in turn, could adversely affect the performance of the system.

Since we wanted to design our test so that it comes as close as possible to a real situation, we left all settings, as would presumably be

the case with most users, as recommended by Safe'n'Sec Personal.

Please note here that the Heuristic is disabled since the manufacturer claims that it slows down the execution of the product. Security should, however, have precedence over speed.

If you click with the right mouse button on the icon of a program, you will find a new entry in the context menu bearing the title "Run in Install Mode", which is also provided with the icon of the rhino and, thus, catches your attention immediately. With the help of this function, programs can be started or terminated

in the installation mode, provided that you have initiated the installation yourself.
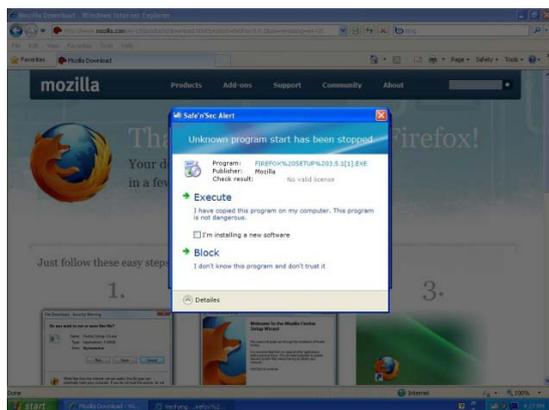
All in all, handling and configuring the program are conceivably simple, if you do not meddle with those sections of the program that you are not familiar with and simply trust the program with such matters.

Installation tests

For the following test, we conceived and created a list of programs, which we would download via the Internet respectively and install directly from the browser itself. If this did not work out, the downloaded program would be installed manually via Windows

Explorer. Our list included various programs that have widespread application: Firefox 3.5, Openoffice 3.1, Thunderbird 2, Quicktime Player 7.6.2, VLC Media Player 1.0.0, PGP 9, Windows Live Messenger 8.1, Office 2007 Professional Trial, Adobe Reader 9.1, Yahoo Messenger 9, ICQ 6.5, and Skype.

We opened Internet Explorer 8 with Safe'n'Sec Personal running without any problem, as this application is already in the list of trusted applications.

Firefox 3.5

The program was downloaded directly in the browser, there was a security warning from Windows, one from Safe'n'Sec. We have seen an alert about an unknown application running (Untrusted).

In this window we chose the option "I am installing a new software" and then "Execute". Manual installation is successful. The program works.

Openoffice 3.1

The program was downloaded directly in the browser and there was a security warning from Windows, and known already alert about an unknown application running (Untrusted).

In this window we chose the option "I am installing a new software" and then "Execute". Manual installation is successful. The program works.

Thunderbird 2

The program was downloaded directly in the browser, there was a security warning from Windows, one from Safe'n'Sec. There is an alert about unknown application running (Untrusted).

In this window we chose the option "I am installing a new software" and then "Execute". Manual installation is successful. The program works.

Quicktime Player 7.6.2

The program was downloaded directly in the browser, there was a security warning from Windows, the setup started and we finally received a message from Safe'n'Sec that an installation is in progress (Trusted).
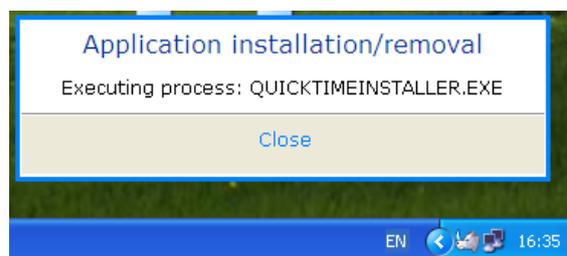
The setup executed without any problem and even the program ran without any errors.

VLC Media Player 1.0.0

The program was downloaded directly in the browser and there was a security warning from Windows, the first setup window also had no text, however, the button "Next" worked and the remaining windows were then again legible. The installation ran normally, the last window, however, again, did not have any text and we could, thus, not get any information regarding the outcome of the installation. However, the program worked properly.


PGP 9.6

After the download we decompressed the ZIP archive and started the 32-bit installer manually. Before the setup started, Safe'n'Sec displayed known for us alert about unknown application running (Untrusted).

In this window we chose the option "I am installing a new software" and then "Execute". Manual installation is successful. The system restarts. The license is activated. The program works.

Windows Live Messenger 8.1

The program was downloaded directly in the browser; there was a security warning from Windows, the setup started. There is a message from Safe'n'Sec that an installation is in progress (Trusted).
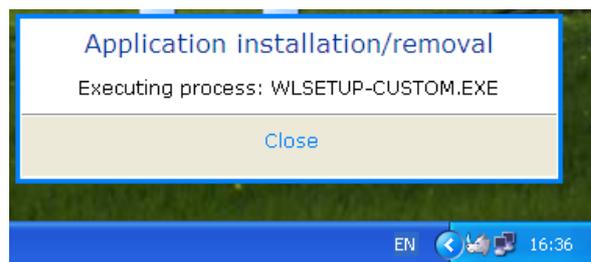
The setup executed without any problem. The program works.
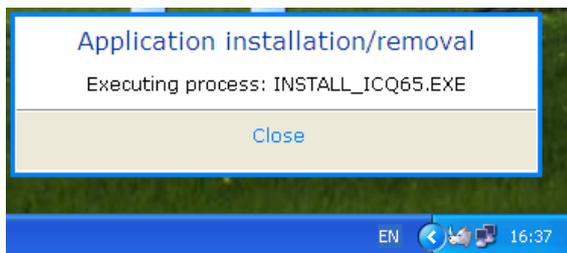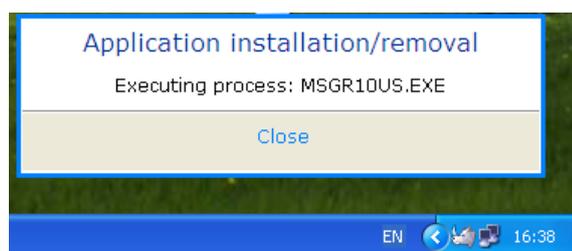
Office 2007 Professional Trial

The program was downloaded directly in the browser; there was a security warning from Windows, the setup program started. Safe'n'Sec displayed an alert about unknown application running (Untrusted).

In this window we chose the option "I am installing a new software" and then "Execute". Manual installation is successful. The program works.

ICQ 6.5

The program was downloaded directly in the browser, there was a security warning from Windows, and the setup program runs normally. We have got a message from Safe'n'Sec that an installation is in progress (Trusted).

The setup executed without any problem. The program works.

Adobe Reader 9.1

Click on the download link. There is a warning. The download starts. There is a message from Safe'n'Sec about unknown application running (Untrusted).

In this window we chose the option "I am installing a new software" and then "Execute". Manual installation is successful. The program works.

Yahoo Messenger 9.0

The program was downloaded directly in the browser, there was a security warning from Windows, and the setup program runs normally. We have got a message from Safe'n'Sec that an installation is in progress (Trusted).

The setup executed without any problem. The program works.

Skype

The program was downloaded directly in the browser, there was a security warning from Windows, and the setup program runs normally. A message from Safe'n'Sec that an installation is in progress (Trusted).
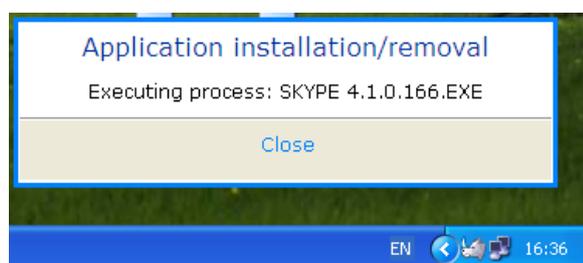
The setup executed without any problem. The program works.

Notes: list of trusted applications is constantly updated and expanded with each new version of Safe'n'Sec Personal and Safe'n'Sec Enterprise Suite.

Malware test

We have tested the software on 100 current Malware Samples (Adware, Spyware, Viruses, Trojan Horses, Backdoors, etc.) that were not detected by other major Anti-Virus products at time of testing.

During testing Safe'n'Sec Personal a protection rate of 100% was achieved, but we should notice, however, only with the help of interaction by the user. It is difficult for an inexperienced user to differentiate between malware and normal software, since the warning messages are identical. If malware has been detected, it can still be executed, if desired.

Uninstallation

During un-installation we were curious, above all, to see what would happen to the programs that had been installed. To do this, we started the Control Panel and uninstalled the program via the "Add or Remove Programs" option. Even the un-installation procedure took place quickly and absolutely without any problems. At the end, we were called upon to restart the computer, which we did immediately.

After restarting, all programs installed previously continued to work perfectly: Firefox 3.5, Openoffice 3.1, Thunderbird 2, Quicktime Player 7.6.2, VLC Media Player 1.0.0, PGP 9, Windows Live Messenger 8.1, Office 2007 Professional Trial, Adobe Reader 9.1, Yahoo Messenger 9, ICQ 6.5, and Skype.

Conclusion

Safe'n'Sec Personal of S.N. Safe & Software is a well-designed product, which really has the potential to protect users from all types of threats from the Internet. Fundamentally, the approach followed, that of allowing all programs to run in a secure environment, which is secured by behavioral analysis and using the VIPO solution (Valid Inside Permitted Operations), is a highly interesting one.

The high reliability of protection is provided by application control not only through the installer/uninstaller whitelist but also through the dynamic control and behavioral analyzer technologies.

The protection against zero-day attacks is delivered through a system of profiling, identification and behavioral analysis of applications. Protection against software vulnerabilities is provided by preventing the execution of unidentified applications within an isolated environment and restriction of Windows privileges. Safe'n'Sec Personal also allows the creation of restrictions on access to files, registry, processes, and access to applications.

The only potential downside for Safe'n'Sec Personal at this point is, we believe, its relatively greater emphasis on technological functionality over ease of use. Sometimes it requires pretty good technological background from usual users to differentiate between malware and normal software, since the warning messages are identical.

All minor issues we encountered during our review were reported by us to the developer, which promptly addressed and fixed them in the updated version Safe'n'Sec Personal.

At present, the personal edition of the program costs about € 20.95 per annum in the online shop and can be procured in digital form directly from the web shop of the manufacturer. In addition, you have the option of purchasing the program from any of their sales partners.

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For more information about AV-Comparatives and the testing methodologies, please visit our website.

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