

# Giving fair warning before plugging in your computer

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 [devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20050921-15](http://devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20050921-15)

September 21, 2005



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That colleague who gave me the AOL CD that came with a big-iron server later received a prototype Itanium computer for testing purposes. The early Itaniums were behemoths. They weighed a ton, sounded like a weed whacker, and put out enough heat to keep you comfortably warm through the winter. (If you opened them up, you would likely see several carefully-shaped Styrofoam blocks with the label “Do not remove! Engineering styrofoam!” I never thought I would ever see the phrase “engineering styrofoam” used seriously. Note: Styrofoam® is a registered trademark of the Dow Chemical Company; consequently, it should be capitalized. The generic term is “foamed polystyrene”. Mind you, the Dow Chemical Company also claims to have trademarked the color Blue [see \*\*].)

Never one to read all the safety labels before playing with a new toy, my colleague took the heavy-duty double-capacity power cables and ran them to the normal wall socket. Then he threw the power switch.

And the power went out in the entire building wing.

The power surge from the Itanium overloaded the poor wall socket and tripped the wing’s circuit breaker. Everybody went through the standard power outage drill, while speculating amongst themselves what the cause for this one might be.

It didn’t take long for word to get out. “Fred plugged in his Itanium.” (Not his real name.)

After the electricians came by to check that everything was okay, they reset the circuit breaker and everybody got back to work.

My colleague re-cabled the machine to be more friendly to the building’s power circuitry. Then he sent out email to the entire team.

“I’m turning it on!”

Everybody laughed.

And then hit Ctrl+S just in case.

Raymond Chen

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