

Update "On Update" - Jan 20, 2012

Two days ago we sent an alert about a possible bug in AskPlus that could result in selected records being accidentally deleted during an update. We were able to isolate a section of code that could possibly delete records if a flag was over-written in memory. We could not find any scenario to explain how the flag was corrupted. We have re-written the code to eliminate any chance of an accidental delete in the future, and are confident that it is safe to continue using the update command with the new version of AskPlus.

The new version, E.8.3.3, has been posted and is available for immediate download. Vital Soft encourages all clients, particularly those who use the AskPlus update option, to install the new version. The installation instructions include the syntax for launching and testing this version.

I would like to apologize for any inconvenience that this issue may have caused. I also want to thank you for your choosing Vital Soft – we appreciate the opportunity to work with you and help with your reporting needs.

John Overton
President

Email Sent to Clients on Jan 18, 2012
Important AskPlus Notification

Dear Customers,

This email is to inform you of a possible bug in AskPlus affecting jobs using the AskPlus "update" statement.

A customer recently contacted Vital Soft after an AskPlus "update" job apparently deleted records in the database rather than updating them. The job in question was run in production successfully many times, both before and after the incident occurred. This scenario should be impossible, however, the evidence is very strong that an AskPlus bug exists and we felt the problem was serious enough to inform you immediately.

A detailed review of the code has identified a section of code that would cause the delete if the value of a certain flag was modified (or corrupted). We have concluded that there must be a bug which changes the value of the flag resulting in the delete. We are currently modifying the update code in AskPlus to perform several additional checks which will eliminate the possibility of this occurring in the future. Our goal is to have a new version of AskPlus posted by the end of the week. We will contact you again as soon as the new version is available.

The AskPlus version in question is E.8.2.3. The "update" code was not modified in the E.8.2.3 release, so it is possible that this bug does exist in other versions as well. Although probably not a factor, the Eloquence version was 8.0, Spectrum 2011.2 EOY and Unix 11.23 (PA Risc).

AskPlus does have the ability to create a quick backup of any selected data using the SAVE command. This command can be used to easily create a "binary dump" of the entire record for the selected entries. The SAVE should be inserted between the FIND and the REPORT that does the update. Depending on the number of selected records, this file could be quite large, so

be sure to delete it when it is no longer needed. The syntax is as follows:

FIND

...

END

SAVE OUT=/path/filename,flat,delete;ALL;END

REPORT

...

#varname, update, item-name

...

END

We recognize that the update statement is very important to many of our clients. We apologize for the inconvenience and want to assure you that we take this matter very seriously. We are very confident that the new version will eliminate any possibility of records being accidentally deleted. Please contact me directly if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

John Overton
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