

windows xp activation causes start-up lock

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I'm having a strange issue about which I and my tech friends are scratching our heads.

I'll preface with a little background info. For the last six months or so, when Windows XP has been starting up, usually it will come up right away, but sometimes it stays on the black Windows XP splash screen (with the blue bars running across) for a couple minutes before it starts. Regardless, it always started, so I ignored it.

A few days ago I went ahead and let Windows Update install SP3. Through the process, my computer locked up three times and I had to restart each time, but eventually it successfully installed. When Windows Update asked me to reboot at the end of the installation, I did, and when the black splash screen came up this time, XP would not start up. The blue bars move across for a couple minutes, then pause a minute, then move across again, cycling indefinitely.

I booted in safe mode successfully, but couldn't find any hardware issues. I could not think of anything else to do, and, thinking I got a bad SP3 installation, I made backups of everything I needed on my boot drive, and formatted and reinstalled Windows XP from my installation disk (which has SP2). XP installed successfully, so I rebooted a few times to make sure it was working. Then I installed my motherboard drivers so that my onboard network adapter would be recognized, and then rebooted a few more times to make sure it was still working. Next, I downloaded the full version of the SP3 update and installed it successfully without having the earlier lockups. I rebooted a few more times, all successfully. Finally I activated Windows XP. I tried to reboot again, and I got the same issue as before – getting stuck on the black splash screen.

It seemed odd to me that activation would cause Windows to lock, and I was still thinking it was an SP3 issue, so I did more tests, in slightly different order:

- Reinstalled Windows XP clean (three successful reboots)
- Installed SP3 before motherboard drivers (three successful reboots)
- Installed motherboard drivers (three successful reboots)
- Activated Windows (first reboot fails as before)

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Reinstalled Windows XP clean (three successful reboots)

Installed motherboard drivers (three successful reboots)

Activated Windows w/o installing SP3 (first reboot fails as before)

I didn't want to try to do this many more times because I don't want my Windows key to get locked.

Any information anyone can give would be most appreciated.

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