

Time Bomb 2000

review by Kate Schell

Time Bomb 2000: What the Year 2000 Crisis Means to You!

By Ed Yourdon and Jennifer Yourdon

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Most of those who've been in the computing business for a while know Ed Yourdon as the author of numerous tomes on software development methodologies. With *Time Bomb 2000: What the Year 2000 Computer Crisis Means to You!* he steps into a different arena. Ed Yourdon and his daughter Jennifer Yourdon have undertaken an analysis of the potential impact of the year 2000 crisis on the average American. They explore the implications of failures that last for a few days, a month, a year, or ten years in the following arenas: Jobs, Utilities, Transportation, Banking/Finance, Food, Home PCs, News and Information, Health/Medicine, Government, Embedded Systems, Education, Telephone and Mail Services.

This book isn't about programming. It won't help any programmer fix a line of code. It is focused on information the average citizen may need to *survive* problems caused by the year 2000 computer problem. I found the chapters on Jobs, Health/Medicine and Food to be particularly disturbing.

The authors pose a fundamental question: How long can you afford to be without a job? Most Americans rely on a steady income to service a serious debt load: mortgages, automobile loans, credit card debt. If you assume that a few industries may collapse altogether, eliminating entire professions, what happens to people in those professions? What happens to the banking system if a lack of confidence causes a run on the banks in late 1999?

One of my relatives is an insulin-dependent diabetic.

What will happen to him if the insulin supply dries up due to either production problems or transportation problems? Is there anybody out there who wants to be the first to undergo radiation or chemotherapy in 2000?

What happens to society if the food supply is jeopardized by computer problems? Imagine a store with empty shelves due to transportation problems. Now imagine thousands of stores. Imagine a critical food group becoming contaminated due to lack of pharmaceuticals (antibiotics for poultry) or pesticides. Our society is held together by some pretty bizarre supply chain links.

Although I had already settled on a number of personal contingency plans (a month's financial reserves, two cords of firewood, a month's supply of food and water, a generator and fuel reserves to run it for about a month), the Yourdons have done a good job of identifying many of the risks facing our society as a whole as we face the challenge of the "Millennium Bug."

I recommend this book to friends regularly. It is available at most bookstores, and can be purchased at several online bookstores as well. **M**

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