



# Use of third party proprietary drivers with APC UPSs

Some recent announcements by competitive UPS manufacturers recommend the use of their proprietary software with APC hardware. These software solutions are not based on any published open standard but are proprietary management packages that replace the APC driver with one of their own.

This approach involves reverse engineering the APC driver (with no assistance from APC). This is a dangerous implementation because a poorly written driver can cause unpredictable behavior ranging from the display of incorrect data to unexpected system shutdowns to the operating system hanging. As a result, the reliability of the entire computer system is put at risk.

In third-party surveys when users were asked to rank the top five factors influencing UPS purchase, reliability is usually the first buying factor. While manageability is also an important element of any UPS purchase, it is clear from these studies that it should not come at the cost of reliability. Since reliability is the most important characteristic of any UPS system, APC does not recommend the use of any non-APC approved software with proprietary drivers to manage APC UPSs.

However, the concept of open management of UPS devices is one that APC applauds. In fact, APC was the first UPS manufacturer to offer support for open standards such as SNMP and Web-based protocols and is the only manufacturer to support DMI. It is APC's firm belief that management by industry-accepted standard protocols is the key to solving the problem of management of devices in a heterogeneous environment.

This model of proprietary drivers and open management interfaces is an accepted method of management of devices outside of the UPS industry. For example, most printers are manageable via an SNMP interface. However, the driver for the printer is specific to the printer. Who would ever use an Epson printer driver with an HP printer? While the question seems absurd in the printer industry, for some reason some UPS companies find it completely logical.

By utilizing standard interfaces, customers benefit since they are then free to choose their management package. By utilizing SNMP, customer's are free to choose any SNMP-based management platform such as HP OpenView, CA Unicenter, or Cabletron Spectrum. The customer is not tied to any specific manufacturer for their device management solution. While replacing drivers may be an interesting exercise for the manufacturer, in the end, customers are stuck with a proprietary management package that won't integrate or associate with other management platforms.

In addition, APC offers support for other management packages such as Microsoft SMS, Compaq Insight Manager, HP TopTools, IBM NetFinity, and Tivoli TME/10. By integrating with all of these tools, APC customers are free to choose the network management package that is the best for their situation and have the ability to manage APC UPSs reliably. Proprietary UPS management packages that replace drivers are not addressing this critical customer need.

In summary, APC has been executing on developing management solutions based on industry-accepted standards. Other manufacturers have expended resources in an attempt to utilize a UPS-specific proprietary management package. This approach is unfortunately narrow since it does not incorporate the UPS as part of the network. APC's research shows that most customers want to manage their UPSs in conjunction with their other network devices. Therefore, the industry should be moving towards those defined network management standards instead of this outdated proprietary approach.

If you are currently utilizing a third party proprietary software package that replaces APC drivers, APC will provide you with PowerChute plus free of charge. APC strongly recommends that customers utilize only APC drivers with APC UPSs. Any customer who needs such an upgrade can either download it off APC's Web site at <http://www.apcc.com>, or can contact APC's technical support if the version they are seeking is not posted on our Web site. Call the number listed below for additional information.