

Next version of Microsoft Office coming in 2010

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(AP) -- Microsoft Corp.'s next version of its Office desktop programs will reach consumers next year, though not likely in conjunction with the Windows 7 operating system.

Microsoft is set to announce Wednesday that Office 2010 will be finished and ready to send to manufacturers in the first half of next year.

From there, it can take six weeks to four months or more for the programs to reach PC users, said Chris Capossela, a senior vice president in the [Microsoft](#) group that makes Office. The timing will differ for big businesses and individual consumers, and for people who buy packaged software versus those who download it.

Some industry watchers had expected a new version of Office this year, but Microsoft [Chief Executive](#) Steve Ballmer extinguished that rumor at a meeting with analysts in February.

Capossela declined to be more specific about a launch date. Windows 7, the successor to Windows Vista, is scheduled to reach consumers by the end of January 2010.

Office 2010 - previously known by the code name "Office 14" - will include slimmed-down versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote that let people create and edit documents in a Web browser. Consumers will have access to a free, ad-supported version, and Capossela said the company is still hammering out what to charge businesses that want a version without ads.

Microsoft plans to let hundreds of thousands of people test a technical preview of the new Office portfolio starting in the third quarter of 2009, Capossela said. The company did not say whether average PC users will have a chance to test a more polished beta version.

Microsoft also said a new version of its Exchange e-mail server will be available for purchase in the second half of 2009. When paired with the next version of Microsoft's Outlook e-mail program, Exchange 2010 aims to prevent e-mail faux pas and would warn people against trying to "reply all" to a huge distribution list. Microsoft said it can also be tweaked to stop people from sending e-mail outside the organization, helping businesses cut down on unnecessary e-mail and prevent leaks.

A beta version of Exchange 2010 was to be made available on Wednesday.

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