



Digital Disasters

Points to Ponder

- It's estimated that **over 80% of all companies that suffer a catastrophic data loss never recover and go out of business.** Is not protecting your data worth that risk?
- What if you or your business lost just a week's worth of business, or lost your database or billing system?
- Have you considered how much of your life is on your computer? It holds photos, email, music, financial records, documents, and so much more.
- How will you survive a computer disaster?
- How much would it cost you in time or money to recover?
- How would you feel if you woke up tomorrow and everything was gone?
- The statistics are staggering: every year **43% of computer users lose irreplaceable files** through
 - Accidental Deletion
 - Theft *Only 3 out of 100 stolen laptops are ever recovered*
 - Disaster *Thousands of files are lost each year to devastation, from catastrophic natural disasters to simple power surges.*
 - Drive Failure *Up to 13% of hard drives crash in their first year. Most hard drives are expected by their manufacturers to have a life of just 2 years while users expectations are for much, much longer*

Why Off- Site Backups?

- **Off-Site is more reliable.** *External hard drives are not ideal for backups because they usually sit right next to your computer. So if your computer is stolen, damaged by fire, flood or virus attack, both the computer and the hard drive are gone*
- You can **access files from any computer in the world**
- You can **access files when traveling, on vacation, at home, school or work**
- You **don't have to choose, install, upgrade or maintain your own hardware**
- **Cost.** *Local media backups result in much more operational down time and costs in the event of a disaster*

Creating Your Digital Disaster Plan

1. **Prioritize data.** *The information in this step isn't critical to the process but will save you money if you use it.*

a. **If some of your data is rarely accessed, back it up to disc, tape or thumb drives and deliver to an off-site location** for safe storage. This will reduce the need for your regular backup's storage space and thus reduce your costs.

A Few Facts:

- i. Thumb drives, CDs, DVDs, and tape last longer than hard drives. This is because the former have no moving parts.
- ii. The *top* of a CD or DVD is far more sensitive to scratches and other destroying sources than the bottom. Be careful to use disc-safe pens and avoid labels.
- iii. CDs and DVDs are rated with different life spans. When backing up for a long-term archive:
 1. Make TWO backups of the same data and keep them in separate locations.
 2. Spend a little more and buy brand-name media
 3. Check the rating on the media to be sure it was manufactured with the intent of being archival.

b. Once you've decided on the data that will go to your off-site backup service, **determine if you can relegate some folders to being backed up at different intervals than others.** For example, your screen saver files might only need to be backed up monthly, your billing system may need backing up just once a day while your email may require backup once an hour. Knowing how much data you have in each group of backup intervals will help you choose a service that is a good fit for your needs.

2. **Choose an Off-Site Backup provider.** Here are some things to consider when deciding which is the best fit for you:

Security. Data is encrypted during transmission

Speed. How long does it take to make a backup or retrieve a file? Is your computer slowed down while that is happening?

Access. You should be able to easily access your files from any computer, smartphone or iPhone (with the proper login credentials, of course)

Flexible scheduling. You should be able to schedule backups to happen without your input (and when your computer is not in use) and also to run one immediately when the need arises.

Flexible archiving. You should be able to control which of your files is set for short term archiving versus long-term archival storage

Flexible processing. A good backup system is able to handle Windows, Mac, Linux and Unix operating systems through FTP, FTPS, SFTP or Samba connections

Agentless software. This means you can backup data across multiple machines, and even locations, through a centralized system

Logs. The system should support full file logs, sending you emails or alerts to demonstrate backups are occurring and/or if there are problems.

Hot, Locked, In-Use File Backups. Your off-site backup system must be able to backup SQL Databases, Microsoft Exchange Servers and Outlook files—even while they are in use

Support. How easy is it to contact the backup company if you need help? What is the average response time? Do they speak normal English (not just geek)?

Backup of the backup. The provider should make backups of your backup

Location. Make sure your off-site provider isn't too close to you geographically. After all, you don't want your backups affected by the same natural disaster as your office.

Cost. You'll find costs are all over the place and it can be difficult to compare apples to apples. Pay attention to how much space you get on the backup server and also if there are limits to how much data you can transfer each month.

3. Consider a second Off-Site Backup provider. It sounds redundant, and it is, but it is very smart to have two to three backups of your most valuable data. I've been reliant on computer data in my business for about 20 years now and TWICE have experienced a primary computer AND it's main backup being inaccessible at the same time. The third backup we have in place now will take ten years to cost as much as the data recovery service we used the first time to resolve the data loss (not counting the emotional toll and lost operational time). Our second catastrophic loss was not fully recoverable and was devastating to our business, and that of a handful of our clients. Six months later, we are just beginning to recover.

Off-Site Backup Services

- www.idrive.com
- www.mozy.com
- www.safecopybackup.com

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