Personal Computer Consultants

WORKING SMART

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BACKUP BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

With the proper forethought, you can sleep soundly knowing that the information that has taken years to compile is safe from hardware, software and human failure. Unfortunately, this subject is often ignored or underemphasized until a crisis occurs. When the technician asks for the latest backup, you break out in a cold sweat.

The **most common** defense is a tape drive , used with companion software to run it, to backup the entire contents of the drive on which your primary data is stored. One of the most important considerations is the ability to backup on a single tape allowing you to AVOID THE NEED FOR HUMAN INTERVENTION . For the same reason you need to have tape backup software that can automatically run on a predefined schedule, usually every night. If both of these items are in place, the only human intervention required is someone switching (rotating) tapes each day and checking the backup log for errors.

It is important to ROTATE TAPES to guarantee you have an uncorrupted copy of your data, as corruption can go undetected for some time. It is also important to pull and RETAIN A TAPE FROM THE ROTATION REGULARLY. Let's take a look at the scenario of a five-tape rotation. Because you write over your backup every five days, you have five days to catch a corruption issue before your undamaged copy is overwritten. However, if you pull the first tape each week, store it and replace it with a new one, you can go back as far as your retained copies.

The data stored on your hard drive probably represents years of work.

Your **most reliable** backup is made from within your individual programs and should serve as your primary backup. It is **critical** that these files be stored somewhere other than the location of the main data. It is also important to have a schedule of when each program will be backed up. The drawback

continue on reverse

- Do not save your primary backup to the same hard drive where your data is located. If the disk drive fails, your data and the backup are lost.
- Replace the tapes at least yearly as they wear out.
- Run a cleaning tape every few months.
- If your backup software cannot backup open files, close all programs before it runs.
- When launching a primary backup, include the date in the name of the backup file.
- Always run a backup before performing an action that modifies a large amount of data such as closing a period or purging.
- Before restoring a file from a backup, rename the damaged file so that the restore does not replace the damaged file.
- Review the tape backup log daily.

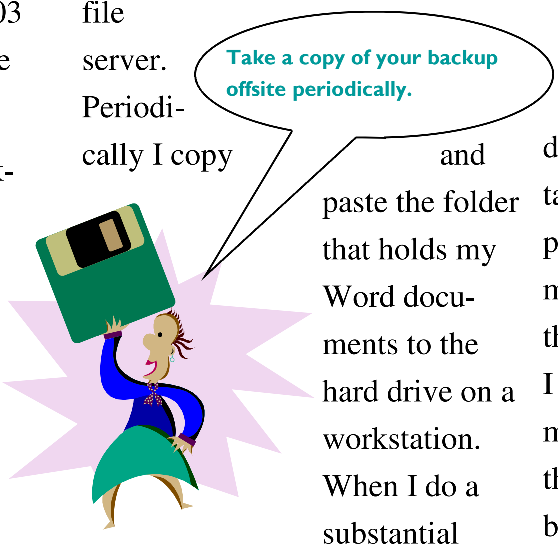
BACKUP BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE (*continued from reverse*)

here is that this method is entirely dependent on human intervention. Some programs (such as QuickBooks Pro 2003 and up) allow you to schedule an automatic backup.

I recommend saving backups of critical files to an external device such as a CD-ROM, Zip drive or even the hard drive on another computer if your computers are networked.

AS FOR ME…

In my business I use four main programs: Microsoft Word, Timeslips (billing), QuickBooks (AP and financial statements) and Amicus (contact management and calendaring). The data files for each of these programs are located on the file server. Periodically I copy and paste the folder that holds my Word documents to the hard drive on a workstation. When I do a substantial amount of work in Timeslips or QuickBooks (usually daily), I run a backup from within the program and send it to a workstation. I use the current date to name the backup files. Amicus can be set to run a backup automatically so I have it set to run each night saving the backup file to a workstation.



I use ARCserve® to run a tape backup of my server hard drive each night. I use a twenty tape rotation AND since I am super paranoid (having helped the multitude of clients who thought they did but didn't have backups), I burn a CD weekly that contains my critical data files from each of these programs. This is my backup routine. What is yours?

Taking a little bit of time now to secure your data will prevent a disaster in the future. Do not forget that without a backup you are betting that your hardware, software and human resources will NEVER fail. ■