

Back up before you melt down

Losing all your data to a hard drive crash can be prevented with caution

Barbara from Wadsworth writes “***My computer crashed...my son took the hard drive to see if he could retrieve anything. He could not get it to start up. We bought a new hard drive and I'm up and running again. Can you take my old hard drive and retrieve the pictures and data from it or is it a done deal? I was remiss in not saving my data so I'm sick about losing everything. I also do not feel real comfortable leaving my hard drive with just anyone as I do all my banking and buy items online so I have lots of info that I would not want to get into the wrong hands. I was thrilled to see your article in the post this morning knowing your honesty. I would also be interested in watching you try to retrieve the info as I love everything related to computers and would like to know more about them.***”

Hard drive crashes do not happen often. It is fairly certain, however, that everyone who uses a computer will experience a hard drive crash. When a hard drive crashes, it is usually a very big inconvenience and can even be a very serious problem if the lost data is irreplaceable.

Backing up your data is the single most important routine task required when working with computers. Other important routine tasks are confirming your AntiVirus program and Windows security patches are updating and checking for Spyware.

Ideally, your backup should run automatically. You should use a very reliable media such as tape or a good quality CD, DVD or USB Memory Stick. You should have more than one of this media so that you can maintain several generations with at least one off-site. Another very good option is to subscribe to a quality online backup service. Several options are www.ibackup.com, www.datadepositbox.com, www.datavaultcorp.com, www.backup.com.

Remember that your backup media has your data on it. If this falls into someone else's hands, your data is compromised!!! Be very careful where you store backups!

Testing your backup is as simple as checking each device to be sure the data is on it and to be sure that it is restorable. Be cautious that you do not overwrite current data. If you are unsure of how to do this, please get professional help.

Restoring data if you have a problem can be a problem itself. Most of the time you will want to get professional help with restoring.

Data can be retrieved off of most crashed hard drives. The exception is when the drive is exposed to very strong magnetism. Data is stored on the drives in a magnetic form. The drive is sent to a “clean room” where it is opened and the individual disks are removed. These disks are then put into reading devices that pull off the data. There are numerous companies that provide this service. Our favorite is www.ontrack.com.

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