

Keep Your Data Safe

Data loss happens every day. Hard drives crash, files get deleted and all of the sudden that document you so desperately need is gone. More often than not, once a file is gone there's very little chance of getting it back unless you have a good backup.

Used to be, people would back up their entire computer onto a single tape. With the size of today's hard drives that is no longer feasible. Instead, most people now back up only their data. But even then, is their data really safe? Following are some of the most common mistakes people make in regards to backing up their data.

First, most people don't back up at all or don't back up often enough. If your data is really important you should be backing up daily. The more important your data is, the more often you should back up.

Second, a lot of people back up to floppy discs. If this is you, you might as well not be backing up at all. Floppy discs have a very high failure rate and the chances of having a bad disc in a backup set are extremely high. And if one disc in a set is bad, then the whole backup is unreliable.

Third, most people that backup to a tape will eject that tape and then place it right on top of the computer "for safe keeping". If a fire were to burn the building down, then both the computer and the tape are gone. Some people think that putting that tape in a fire-proof safe is enough. These safes are fire-proof, not heat-proof. By the time the fire is put out, any tapes inside that safe have probably melted and are ruined. You should consider off-site storage of your media.

Another fatal mistake people make is using only one backup tape or disc over and over again. You should always have at least 2 or more of these that you rotate. That way if you get a bad backup on one, you can go back to the previous day's backup to restore the lost data.

With the advent of re-writeable CDs, it is now possible for most people to backup all of their data onto a single CD. By far, a CD is much more reliable (and cheaper) than either a tape or a floppy disc. If you are backing up to a tape, unless you have another compatible tape drive, you won't be able to read that tape if your drive ever goes bad. With a CD you simply pop your disc into any CD-ROM drive and you can easily read your data again.

In conclusion, if your data is important to you, you should seriously evaluate your current procedures for backing up. If you are using a tape, it may be time to consider a CD-RW drive. The time to start thinking about how good your backups are is before you lose any data.