

Does Your Computer Smoke?

Did you know that if you regularly smoke in your home then so do your children, your pets, your plants and even your computer? That means if you are a chain smoker then your computer is a chain smoker too. There are few things worse for a computer than cigarette smoke. Why, you ask?

You see, computers need to breathe to stay cool. They do this by forcing air through the case via a cooling fan. This means that if there is a cigarette close by, the fan is going to suck the smoke in and circulate it around the warm components which will tend to attract the tar and nicotine in the smoke. After years of doing this all the components tend to develop a yellowish-brown sticky film on them which attracts dust and lint. This in turn traps more heat which in turn traps more tar, which in turn traps more lint... You get the picture.

When a customer brings in a computer that has been in a smoke-filled environment I can tell right away. The case is usually yellowish and as soon as I turn it on it fills the office with a pungent smell that can linger for days.

I've worked on computers that did some really weird things that just could not be explained or repaired. Some ran really, really slow even with a clean copy of windows. The only thing I can think of is that somehow the tar on the chips was somehow bleeding some of the voltages and causing the chips to malfunction.

But wait, there's more! Laser printers use an ultra-fine laser beam to create the printed image on a photo drum which in turn prints that image on your paper. This is done by bouncing the beam off of a spinning mirror which then reflects that beam onto a long flat mirror just above the drum. When a laser printer has been in a smoke-filled environment for a long time that same tar/nicotine film will coat the mirrors and prevent the laser beam from reflecting at full power. This causes the print to appear very faint. I've worked on printers where the print was barely readable because of the smoke buildup. Can you imagine what this stuff is doing to your insides?

So if you love your kids, your plants, your pets and your computer equipment then don't smoke around them. Better yet, don't smoke at all...