

Before the Storm

Protecting Your Data from Water Damage



How much water does it take to ruin your equipment and destroy your data?

Proper Prior Preparation

With Hurricane Katrina behind us and a new hurricane season approaching, it is important to begin making preparedness plans now. While common sense tells us that water and computer equipment are a bad combination, few people make plans to protect their equipment from water damage. The result can be disastrous.

The most important aspect in any emergency situation is to make sure that you and your family are safe and out of harm's way. However, by planning now, you can ensure the safety of your computer equipment and irreplaceable data as well.

Well before the first storm clouds gather, you need to begin by taking inventory. This inventory should include not only your equipment, but your data as well. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Which computer keeps most of the organization's data on it? This might include payroll, taxes, client information, etc.

2. Are individual employees going to be responsible for backing up their computers on a regular basis?
3. Who is responsible for taking the backups or equipment to a secure location?
4. Has each employee filled out a plan of action form for their equipment?

Create a Plan of Action

In an emergency, the last thing on a person's mind is their computer equipment. That is why it is absolutely necessary to have a plan of action in place beforehand. By taking a few minutes now, you can prevent major headaches later on and get your operation back up and running more quickly.

Use this sample plan of action to create your own plan of action. Remember to post the plan in several places throughout the office so that it can be located quickly in an emergency.

Sample Plan of Action

Item Description	Location/Owner	Serial Number	Person Responsible	Action to Take
1) _____				
2) _____				
3) _____				
4) _____				
5) _____				
6) _____				
7) _____				
8) _____				

The primary contact person is _____ . He/she can be reached at _____ (home) or _____ (cell).



Have a Plan B

Whether you are facing the threat of severe weather or the more everyday threat of leaky pipes, having a plan B for your data is essential. A good plan B will include



A USB jump drive (sometimes called a pen drive) is about the size of a lighter.

an external backup that is also portable. What's an external backup? An external backup is a backup of your data to either a remote server or to a portable device like a CD or jump drive.

Large businesses or those businesses required by law (think banks, government offices, etc.) to have a backup of their company data at a remote site would use a backup service to automatically backup their data.

Companies offer this type of service for a set price each month. A backup of the computers in the office is done every day (usually at night). In the event of lost data or a catastrophe, you simply call the company and they e-mail or mail the data via CD to you.

Connected DataProtector (<http://www.connected.com>) and Ibackup for Windows (<http://www.ibackup.com>) are two examples of this type of company.

For most small organizations and individuals wishing to protect their data, using an external storage device is the most economical way to go. An external storage device would include data written to a CD-ROM and stored in a secure place, an external hard drive, or a USB jump drive/pen drive.

How do I back up my computer to the USB jump drive?

- Step 1: Insert the USB pen drive into the USB port on your computer.
- Step 2: The Found New Hardware window will appear. Allow it to finish detecting the USB drive. The window will then disappear.
- Step 3: Right-click on the My Documents folder. In the pop-up window, left-click Copy.
- Step 4: Go to the My Computer icon on your desktop and double left-click.
- Step 5: In the My Computer window, you will see a Removable Disk icon. Double left-click on it.
- Step 6: In the Removable Disk window, left-click Edit from the toolbar. In the drop-down menu, left-click Paste. Your documents will now be copied over to your jump drive.



USB pen drive inserted into the USB port on the back of a laptop.

You can repeat this process for any document or folder on your computer. Once you are done, simply remove the jump drive from the computer. It is essential that you keep your backup in a different place, away from your computer. The backup will not do you any good unless it is in a safe place. A jump drive is small enough to keep in your glove compartment. Why put it in your car? Your car is usually in the same place you are during an emergency.



Your vehicle's glove compartment is a good place to store your pen drive.

Take It with You

If you have enough warning, you can plan to take certain equipment with you. Don't try to take the whole office with you—remember you'll need room for clothes, pets, food, and family members! Take only what you need or those items that are small and easy to store. Listed below are some suggestions that are ranked in order of importance. It's a good idea to keep a large plastic "to go" box on hand so all you have to do is drop the items in the box and go.



- 1st NAS unit or External Storage Device
- 2nd Laptops/power supply
- 3rd Polycom unit (the camera that sits on top of the TV)
- 4th Digital cameras and chargers/cell phones and chargers
- 5th Palm Pilots/IPAQs

If You Can't Take It with You

There is no way that you will be able to take all of the equipment in your office with you. Besides, who would want to? In the event that you cannot take the equipment with you, you will need to make plans to secure the equipment in your office. Follow these steps:

1. Turn off all computers.
2. Turn off all monitors.
3. Unplug the computers and monitors from the power source.
4. Turn off all printers.
5. Unplug the printers from the power source.
6. Call Computer Services at (662) 325-3226 and let us know that you are turning off your router (or system). Once you turn off your router, alarms will start going off at Computer Services.
7. Turn the router off. This is the same button you flip when you are "rebooting" the system.

8. Unplug the router.
9. Turn the interactive video equipment off.
10. Unplug the interactive equipment.
11. Scan your office area, looking for any equipment on the floor. Move equipment onto the top of a desk or into an interior closet.

Stuff It, Stowe It, Save It

In the unlikely event that you have time to prepare for a potential threat, there are some additional steps you can take to help ensure your equipment makes it through in "working order."



How high did the water have to rise in order to damage the hard drive?

Computers (Desktop)

1. Backup all documents, photos, Quicken books, etc., to a NAS unit or jump drive.
2. Label the computer (name, address, etc.)
3. Put the computer in a 10m trash bag. Seal the bag with duct tape or a zip tie.
4. Move the computer to higher ground (at least desk level). Do not stack the computers more than two computers high.

Computers (Laptop)

1. If possible, take the laptop with you when you leave.
2. If you can't take it with you, place the laptop in its carrying case.
3. Put the laptop in a 10m trash bag. Seal the bag with duct tape or a zip tie.
4. Move the computer to higher ground (at least desk level). Laptops are lightweight, so make sure they are properly secured, but do not put anything heavy on top of them. You might put them on a shelf in a closet or filing cabinet.

Monitors

1. Place a soft cloth over the glass screen of the monitor.
2. Put the monitor in a 10m trash bag. Seal the bag with duct tape or a zip tie.
3. Store it (screen side down) in a secure location.

Printers

1. Take the paper out of the paper trays.
2. If it is a small printer, put it in a sealed 10m trash bag.
3. If it is a large printer, cover it with a trash bag.

Polycom Units (Interactive Video Equipment)

1. Take the camera with you (leave the cables there).
2. Place a tarp or large trash bag over the TV and cart. Roll the cart to an interior room or closet.

Palm Pilots/IPAQs

1. Take the Palm Pilot/IPAQ with you when you leave.
2. If you cannot take it with you, place it in a Ziploc bag.
3. Make sure you put the cradle and power supply in the sealed Ziploc bag.
4. Label the bag and place it in your "to go" box.

Things to Keep on Hand



Digital Cameras

1. Charge camera batteries.
2. Take the camera with you when you leave.
3. If you can't take the camera with you, place it in its carry bag.
4. Place the camera in a sealed Ziploc bag or 10m trash bag.
5. Place the sealed bag in your "to go" box.



Scanners

1. Place a soft cloth over the glass in the scanner.
2. Tape the lid of the scanner to the base of the scanner (with Scotch tape).
3. Place the scanner in a sealed 10m trash bag.
4. Place the scanner in an interior room off the ground.



Floppies/CDs

1. Floppies and CDs that have data on them should be placed in your "to go" box and taken home with you.
2. Place the floppy disks in a sealed Ziploc bag.
3. Put CDs in their cases and place them in a sealed Ziploc bag.

Keyboards/Mice

1. Keyboards and mice are not that expensive, so they are easily replaced.
2. Mice should be sealed in a Ziploc bag.
3. Keyboards should be sealed in a 10m trash bag.



Always charge your digital camera batteries before a storm. It is also a good idea to keep extra batteries in the case for emergencies.

Remember: The more layers you put between your computer equipment and the elements, the better chance you have of recovering your important information!

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