Backup Strategies for Computers

If there is one subject I am most adamant about it is backing up your computer. If you don't backup your computer, then the new year is a great time to start. Let me show you how to establish a very comprehensive yet easy to implement back-up system for your computer. Consider the rule of "1-2-3 = Backup". This is a backup strategy that includes three copies of your files. Experts say that if you don't have three copies of your files, then you don't have a true backup.

Part 1 are the Original Files on your computer. They're already on your hard drive. These include documents, spreadsheets, databases, photos, videos, music, email messages, and contact lists.

Part 2 is a Near-Line Backup. It consists of connecting an external hard drive with a USB cable to your computer, and then running your backup from the computer to the external drive. Make sure it uses a USB-3 cable, and that your computer can handle USB-3. Near-Line backups make it very easy to reclaim a lost or damaged file.

Part 3 includes an Off-Line Backup. The best off-line backup includes a subscription to a cloud-based service such as Carbonite (which I use and highly recommend), IDrive, CrashPlan, or so many others. Off-line backups could be a second external hard drive which is stored in a remote location such as a bank vault or even your glove compartment. At the very least, if you have a cloud back up program in use, then you're OK and possibly don't need the near-line backup – although I don't recommend this.

To implement your backup strategy, you will need the appropriate software. There are many backup programs of varying ease of performance, automation, comprehension, and cost. For a Windows PC, I strongly recommend SyncToy for Windows. This is published by Microsoft, is easy to use, Windows 10 compatible, and it's FREE. Just download from the Microsoft Download Center.

Your external hard drive will probably include its own backup program. The files on the backup may be encrypted or scrambled making it difficult to read. This is OK and you can use it. Look for other Windows based Backup Programs such as Acronis True Image, Paragon Backup and Recovery, and many others

For the MAC user there is Time Machine. It is comprehensive and very easy to use backup program that is already installed on your MAC and is exclusively for MACs. Just plug in your external hard drive to the USB port on your MAC. The first time you're connected you will be asked of you want to use this drive as your permanent Time Machine Drive. Time Machine keeps an up to date copy of everything on your MAC. It not only keeps a spare copy of your

files it remembers how your system looked. You are also given the option to encrypt your data. The only issue your need to know is that the external hard drive MUST be dedicated to Time Machine.

Finally, the big question is how often do you backup your computer? The answer is: every time you add new data! So, automate your backup programs to perform a scheduled backup regularly at a time of day or night when you will not be using it.

Now your data is secure. Good luck!

Please come to our Computer & Technology Club meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 7:00 PM in the multi-purpose room in the Club House.

If you have any questions or if there are any topics you would like me to cover in the future, PLEASE send me a note by email to: brianmarder@comcast.net