

Vetech View

Test Your Stuff

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Periodically Test Your Equipment

By Joe Giardina

This is the way it usually starts:

User: "My system crashed".

Tech Support: "Do you have your backup handy."

User: "I sure do! Wait! Why can't I read it? I know it backed up because it's supposed to do an automatic backup every night?"

Almost every computer user in world knows, Murphy's Law is in full effect when it comes to computers. What can happen will happen, and almost always at the most inopportune time. I'm convinced that a computer failure is one of the most stressful events we can face. It can sometimes require obscene amounts of time to restore a computer to its' original condition and sometimes that's just a pipe dream.

Most of us treat our cars better than we do our computers. We wash them, take them in for tune-ups and when something is wrong we take them to the mechanic. If we treated our cars like we do our computers we would just drive them all day long, every day until they break down. Now, a car and a computer are different animals. A car can transport you from place to place in relative comfort and safety. A computer stores your most precious and valuable information. For a veterinary hospital that information is your entire business. Granted, nobody is going to be killed or maimed if your computer breaks down (unless your are the one who is singly responsible). But I personally would rather be stuck on the side of the road with a car that won't run than to have a hard drive crash without a backup.

One of the best maintenance procedures you can perform on your computer is to periodically clean it. However, that is not what this article is about. We have already discussed this procedure many times. This month I would like to discuss how to make sure your entire system is working properly. Some devices are easy to determine if they are working properly. If your computer boots up in the morning then there's a pretty good chance it's working. It's not rocket science. But there are other devices that might not be as obvious.

Your backup drive is arguably the most important component on your computer. Most Advantage users take backing up very seriously, but even after harping about it for all these years there are some who prefer to gamble. But, even those who backup religiously can fall into a false sense of security. How do you know it's working correctly? How do you know it's going to be there when you really need it? The answer is simple, test it. There are several ways to test your backup depending on what type of backup you use. Advantage users generally fall into two categories: Theos users and Windows users. I will explain testing your backups for THEOS users first. Windows users can skip this next paragraph.

Thought for the day: If you must choose between two evils, chose the one that you've never tried before.

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If you are a THEOS user you most likely backup to either a tape or a zip drive. Since most of our Theos users have been with us for many years you are probably familiar with verifying your backup. If not, then here's a little refresher course. From the startup menu choose the Go To THEOS prompt options. This will take you to the operating system level. Type the following command: REST D (VER

D is the drive letter of your backup device. Users with Zip drives will use the D designation. Users with tape drives will just replace the D designation with the word "TAPE". When you press ENTER files will scroll down your screen. If you return to your prompt without any errors then your backup is working properly.

Windows users can use check their backups differently. One way to test a backup is to simply view the contents of your backup device. This can be done by clicking on the "My Computer" icon on your desktop and then clicking on your backup device. If your current backup file is listed then it is working properly.

Another device that is wise to test periodically is an uninterruptable power supply (UPS). A UPS is basically a backup power supply that kicks in when the power goes out. They are designed to keep your computer on long enough for you to properly shut it down. The problem with UPS's is that they usually sit under a desk and are completely forgotten, sometimes for years. When the power does go out is when you discover that it's not working which defeats the purpose of having one altogether. It's a good idea to test it every so often simply by unplugging it. If the battery kicks in when you unplug it then it is doing the job it was designed to do. (Note: make sure all users are logged off before testing your UPS).

Tales From The E-Mail

Comedian Jeff Foxworthy compiled a list that helps people determine whether they're from the Pacific Northwest:

- You know the state flower (Mildew)
- You feel guilty throwing aluminum cans or paper in the trash.
- You know more than 10 ways to order coffee.
- You stand on a deserted corner in the rain waiting for the "Walk" Signal
- You can taste the difference between Starbucks, Seattle's Best, and Veneto's.
- You know the difference between Chinook, Coho, and Sockeye salmon.
- You know how to pronounce Sequim, Puyallup, Issaquah, Oregon, Yakima and Willamette.
- You consider swimming an indoor sport.
- You can tell the difference between Chinese and Thai food.
- In winter, you go to work in the dark and home in the dark-while only working eight-hour days.
- You never go camping without matches and a poncho.
- You have no concept of humidity
- You know that Boring is a town in Oregon and not just a state of mind.
- You put on your shorts when the gets above 50, but still wear your hiking boots and parka.
- You have actually used your mountain bike on a mountain.
- You buy new sunglasses every year because you can't find the old ones after such a long time.
- You design your kid's Halloween costume to fit under a raincoat.
- You know all the important seasons: Winter, Winter, Still Raining (Spring), Road Construction (Summer), Deer and Elk season (Fall).
- You actually understand these jokes and forward them to your friends.