

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

So far, so good...

Usually, this time of the year, I need to re-arrange the meeting schedule, due to one or more meetings being postponed because of inclement weather. Not this year (yet)! I am writing this in January, and it's around 60 degrees. With the weather so warm, I like to sit outside with my laptop. To do this, wireless is necessary. And with any networking technology, security is important.

Get involved with YOUR users group!

Our current Vice President, David Cunningham has decided to step down from his post. David has been of great assistance with the users group and I will miss his input and leadership. But with every door that closes, another one opens. This is the perfect opportunity for someone to step up to the position of Vice President. I plan to run for President again in the February elections (if you will have me), as is the current Treasurer and acting Secretary. If you are reading this and feel that you would like to influence the direction of the users group, please attend the February 8 meeting and step up to the plate!

Secure Wireless Home Networking

At the February 8 General Meeting, we will demonstrate how to securely install a wireless 802.11g home network. Listed below are a few tips to get things going:

If you set up a wireless network, it is very important that you use all of the security capabilities of the devices. These include:

Use the strong (128 bit) WEP encryption built into the devices. Some products only support

64-bit encryption, but you should try to use wireless devices that support both 64 and 128-bit encryption. Use WEP for authentication AND to secure the data being transmitted. This can reduce network throughput by 10-15% (for 64 bit) or 15-25% (for 128 bit). This is not bulletproof protection, but it requires significant effort to break. Someone would have to eavesdrop on a LOT of your network traffic in order to effectively crack this encryption.

Secure your Router/Access Point. Make sure that you require a password for configuration of the router or access point. In addition, make sure you change the default password, as these are well known. You should physically secure your Access Point if possible, to prevent someone from performing a "hard reset" and setting the passwords back to their defaults.

If possible, disallow remote configuration. This requires you to plug directly into the Access Point/Router in order to configure it.

Use MAC address-based association and access control. The MAC address is a unique identifier in a device, and by limiting access to certain MAC addresses, you can help lock out intruding computers. This can be done on our wireless router and our broadband router.

Use NetBEUI instead of TCP/IP for file and printer sharing. If someone gets access to your network, they won't be able to access your files, just your Internet connection.

Only share what you need to. You should share folders and files, not entire hard drives.

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Secure your sensitive files with a strong password. Not a dictionary word, containing non-alpha numeric characters like: !@#%\$^&*.

Use WPA to secure your network. Almost all the Wireless Hardware that came out since the second half of 2004 is WPA-TKIP able. Upgrade from WEP to WPA might be available for a few selected older versions (check you Brand Website). To have a functional WPA on your Wireless Network, both Windows and the Hardware have to be WPA enabled. Microsoft already posted the WPA update for WinXP.

Top 6 Tips for Wireless Home Network Security

1) Change Default Administrator Passwords (and Usernames) (<http://compnetworking.about.com/cs/wirelessproducts/qt/adminpassword.htm>)

At the core of most Wi-Fi home networks is an access point or router. To set up these pieces of equipment, manufacturers provide Web pages that allow owners to enter their network address and account information. These Web tools are protected with a login screen (username and password) so that only the rightful owner can do this. However, for any given piece of equipment, the logins provided are simple and very well-known to hackers on the Internet. Change these settings immediately.

2) Change the Default SSID (<http://compnetworking.about.com/cs/wirelessproducts/qt/changessid.htm>)

Access points and routers all use a network name called the SSID. Manufacturers normally ship their products with the same SSID set. For example, the SSID for Linksys devices is normally "linksys." True, knowing the SSID does not by itself allow anyone to break into your network, but it is a start. More importantly, when someone finds a default SSID, they see it is a poorly configured network and are much more likely to attack it. Change the default SSID immediately when configuring your LAN.

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OFFICERS

President

Mike Young.....(410) 551-4411
president @chesapeakepcusersgroup.org

Vice President

David Cunningham.....(410) 268-2384
vice-president @chesapeakepcusersgroup.org

Treasurer

Karl Richmond.....(410) 268-3860
treasurer @chesapeakepcusersgroup.org

Secretary (Acting)

Kris Johnson.....(410) 544-8706
secretary @chesapeakepcusersgroup.org

Publisher/Editor

Mike Regimenti.....(410) 974-0649
editor@chesapeakepcusersgroup.org

CHAIRPERSONS

Programs Chairperson

Craig Barlow.....(410) 266-6829
programs @chesapeakepcusersgroup.org

Education Chairperson

Sam Shepherd.....(410) 647-6077
education @chesapeakepcusersgroup.org

Membership Chairpersons

Margaret Duggan.....(410) 647-2722
membership @chesapeakepcusersgroup.org

Public Relations Chairperson

Kris Johnson.....(410) 544-8706
pr@chesapeakepcusersgroup.org

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)

New Users Group

Sam Shepherd.....(410) 647-6077
Investment SIG

Len Lindenmeyer.....(410) 647-9142
investments @chesapeakepcusersgroup.org

Technology SIG

Mike Regimenti.....(410) 974-0649
internet@chesapeakepcusersgroup.org

Computer Refurbishing SIG

Fran Damratowski.....(410) 544-7047
refurbishing@chesapeakepcusersgroup.org

Webmeister

Mike DeLucia.....(410) 721-2991
webmeister @chesapeakepcusersgroup.org

OpenOffice.org V.2

by
Fran Damratowski

This is a summary of the January program presentation for members unable to attend the meeting.

General Information about OpenOffice.org (OO.o)

<http://www.openoffice.org/sitemap.html> OO.o is open source software <http://www.opensource.org/docs/definition.php>. In essence anyone can contribute to the development of the project and anyone can use it free of charge. It is multilingual, currently available in 53 languages. It will open three types of Microsoft files, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint if you instruct it to do so during installation. Microsoft will not open OO.o files unless saved with a Microsoft (MS) extension program (.doc for MS word, .xls for MS Excel, .ppt for MS PowerPoint). Just click the "save as" drop down menu.

OpenOffice.org V.1 vs V.2

OpenOffice V.1 Requirements

- Windows 98, ME, NT (SP 6+), 2000, & XP
- 64 MB RAM
- 250 MB available hard drive space

OpenOffice V.2 Requirements

- Windows 98, ME, 2000 (SP 2+), XP, 2003
- 128 MB RAM
- 200 MB available hard drive space

New Features in OO.o V.2 http://www.openoffice.org/dev_docs/features/2.0/index.html

- Open Standard XML file format http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_standard
 - OASIS OpenDocument XML format is the default file format for example:
 - OpenDocument Text.odt
 - OpenDocument Spreadsheet.ods
 - OpenDocument Presentation.odp
 - To open in another program save as that program (.doc for MS word, .rtf for Rich Text Format, .xls for MS Excel, .ppt for MS PowerPoint).

Go to their website <http://www.openoffice.org/> and look around. If you are looking for something in particular go the sitemap <http://www.openoffice.org/sitemap.html>. It's a great office suite, and best of all it's free.

Note: Except where noted, all information was obtained from <http://www.openoffice.org>

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3) Disable SSID Broadcast (<http://compnetworking.about.com/cs/wirelessproducts/qt/disablenessidcast.htm>)

In Wi-Fi networking, the access point or router typically broadcasts the network name (SSID) over the air at regular intervals. This feature was designed for businesses and mobile hotspots where Wi-Fi clients may come and go. This is unnecessary, & increases the likelihood an unwelcome neighbor or hacker will log in to your home network. Most Wi-Fi access points allow the SSID broadcast feature to be disabled by the administrator.

4) Assign Static IP Addresses to Devices (<http://compnetworking.about.com/od/workingwithipaddresses/qt/staticipaddress.htm>)

Most home networkers use dynamic IP addresses. DHCP technology is quick & easy to set up. Unfortunately, this convenience works to the advantage of network attackers, who can obtain valid IP addresses from a network's DHCP pool. Turn off DHCP on the router or access point, set a fixed IP address range, then set each connected device to match. Use a private IP range (like 10.0.0.x) to prevent computers from being directly reached from the Internet.

5) Position the Router or Access Point Safely (http://compnetworking.about.com/cs/wirelessproducts/qt/locate_aprouter.htm)

When installing a wireless home network, the position of the access point or router determines its reach. Try to position these devices near the center of the home rather than near windows to minimize this leakage.

6) Turn Off the Network During Extended Periods of Non-Use

See you at the meeting.

Bring a Friend!

Michael
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How to Diagnose a Faulty Broadband Connection

Why does my cable Internet connection frequently fail?

First, update your security programs (antivirus, antispyware, firewall, and so on). Next, check for viruses and spyware. If a malicious program has turned your PC into a zombie, your Internet link may be overloaded with hidden, illegal activity. One infected PC can block access to your entire network.

After determining that your PC is free of malware, ping your connection to verify that the network hears you. Select *Start, Run*, type **command /k ipconfig**, and press <Enter>. The resulting box shows your network settings, one of which is your PC's IP address. At the command prompt below these, type **ping ipaddress**, where 'ipaddress' is the number that follows 'IP Address'. Press <Enter>. You'll see a series of replies along with a list of ping statistics in milliseconds (see [Figure 1](#)). If the ping fails ("Destination host unreachable"), the problem is with your PC's network adapter, or the connection between the PC and the router. Type **exit** and press <Enter> to close the window.

One possible fix is to restart the router, modem, or whatever device plugs first into the cable running from the wall. If the box lacks a power

button, unplug it, wait a minute, plug it back in, reboot your PCs, and see if the problem is gone.

Another potential low-cost solution, is to swap cables. Change the cables connecting your PCs to the network boxes one at a time to see whether a bad cable was responsible for the outages.

If all of the computers on the network lose Internet access simultaneously (and you've determined that malware isn't to blame), the problem is not with Windows, the PCs' hardware, your cables, or your Wi-Fi connection (if any). But if only one computer on the network loses access, the source of the problem could well be one of those components.

If you use a Wi-Fi network, check your wireless card's connection strength (most cards put an icon for this in the system tray). If the signal is weak, either remove obstructions (such as plants, fish tanks, or CD collections) from the signal path or move your PC closer to the wireless transmitter.

If all of your equipment is working, call your ISP's tech support. If your ISP didn't provide your cable modem or router, you may also have to call the product manufacturer's support line.

Favorite Free Files from 2005

[Mozilla Firefox v1.0.7](http://pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,23160,00.asp127654FreeOct 2005) Browse the Web with the tiny footprint of Mozilla's Firefox. [Maxthon \(previously named MyIE2\) v1.5 Build 95 Combo](http://pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,23120,00.aspTab between windows, gesture with your mouse, and protect your privacy with this browser. 34872FreeOct 2005) [Picasa v2](http://pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,25333,00.asp10560FreeDec 2005) Automatically find photos on your camera and share them with ease.

[ExplorerXP v1.06](http://pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,21131FreeNov 2005) Navigate your files with this tabbed file manager instead of with Windows Explorer. [DeepBurner Free](http://pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,25874,00.asp14386FreeOct 2005) No frills burning software creates data CDs and DVDs.

Toshiba Protégé M200

Hi fellow internet junkies!

I deal with [laptops](#) day in and day out with what I do. I buy, refurbish and resell laptops around the New York City area, so I get my paws on a lot of stuff. I take notes on everything I get, so in case I get anything similar I have something to go on as to what they should be like, and also for pricing.

I am a member of the forums (Lionsault_100) I have been dealing with these machines like this for approximately 3 years, so I know almost every model in some way (especially Dell, IBM, and [Toshiba](#)). The [laptop](#) I have at the moment (and will be reviewing) is the Toshiba Protégé M200 Tablet [Notebook PC](#). This is a great little machine which I acquired from a guy that had to pay the rent + bills and needed fast cash - I won't go into what I paid, but it was a good deal.

These are the specs as I got it (and as it is by default):

- 1.8 GHz [Pentium M](#) (Dothan Core with 400 MHz and beefy 2 MB Cache)
- 12.1 inch SXGA Screen
- 512 MB of PC 2700 memory
- 60 G hard drive
- PCI Intel Pro WIFI A/B/G
- SD Flash Card Reader built in
- NVIDIA 5200FX Graphics controller, with 64 MB of dedicated memory
- No Internal (or external for that matter) DVD or [CD drive](#)
- Windows XP Tablet edition

This is a great machine that I decided to keep for myself because it was light, fast, and the tablet feature was just too cool:

Here are my thoughts on its key elements:

Battery Life: 10/10

Simply great! You can adjust the screen brightness, but when using [the internet](#) and playing music, the battery lasts around 2½ hours. I purchased 3 extra batteries, so I hardly ever have to plug in!

Build quality: 9.5/10

The material this is made out of is top notch. Toshiba has a bad name for generally spotty products, especially on the Satellite and Satellite Pro lines. Of particular note, the AC adapter jack tends to break or lose contact with the rest of the motherboard.

But from what I can tell, they really put a lot into the Protégé line - the material does not feel as if it will break in my hand and since it's a tablet laptop, it has a nice grainy surface over the screen, so it would take the sword of truth to scratch it. But the quality of the ThinkPad T series as a whole is just a bit better.

LCD: 9/10

For me, being a guy in his prime, with perfect close range vision, a 12.1" SXGA display at 1400 x 1050 is simply stunning, and the screen **very** bright. However, it is not a good option for someone older, who may have trouble reading the smaller text on this screen. As stated in the build quality section, it would be very hard to accidentally scratch the screen.

Navigation: 9.5/10

The keyboard feels almost like a full-sized keyboard, which is amazing on a smaller laptop, and the buttons don't feel like they are going to pop off as they do on some of the newer Dell Inspirons I've seen. The engineers also did a great job on the touchpad, though it feels just a tad small, but this is just nitpicking.

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Toshiba Protégé M200 - cont'd

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Overall Performance: 9/10

The laptop is fast - you can't debate that, since it's sporting a 1.8 GHz Dothan. I loaded it with 2 x 512 MB PC2700 which also helped matters, so overall performance is, of course, top notch and boot time fast. The Graphics card is only a Geforce 5200FX, so this definitely is **NOT a gaming laptop**; however, gaming is possible and it runs *UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004* on medium settings great (one day I will get around to benchmarking this).

User Serviceability: 4/10

This is something this laptop really lacks. Hard drive removal and memory replacement is very easy, but things get complicated very quickly.

The fact that the laptop does not have any internal media drives is a **major downfall**. This downfall is understandable to keep the machine light, and I know that there is a docking station (that will allow for a DVD BURNER, or any media drive) which sells for \$350 on Toshiba's website. It's ridiculous and makes a reformat **very** difficult.

What I have to do, is pull the hard drive completely, connect it to my desktop via a laptop hard drive USB enclosure, format the drive, copy the contents of my Windows XP CD, put the hard drive back in, boot the tablet from a USB floppy and then run 'ntsetup' from the hard drive in DOS.

This can prove to be a real pain in the neck - I have to go through this production every time, as booting from a regular USB DVD drive, is not supported.

Overall Rating 9/10

The laptop is amazing and scores a 9/10. It comes down to the fact that it's sturdy, light, fast, and converts into a tablet which is **very** nice.

If this had either an internal DVD drive or bootable USB drive options, I would give it the 10/10. And the tablet features are GREAT - sitting back and just writing out whatever page you want to visit just doesn't get old! Also, being able to stand up and use the machine makes it really great.

These are my thoughts - you decide if it's worth \$1500 at Toshiba, or \$1100 or so for a refurb on eBay.

The Toshiba M200 Pro's and Con's at a glance:

Pros:

- Fast
- Small
- Light
- Very sharp screen
- Great battery performance
- Internal SD Flash drive
- Tablets RULE!

Cons

- No internal CD drive
- Nearly impossible to find a restore disk
- Rude Toshiba tech support
- Very expensive expansion parts



from the Secretary's Desk

Minutes of CHPCUG Board meeting on January 18, 2006

Attendees: Mike Young, Karl Richmond, Mike Regimenti, Craig Barlow, Fran Damratowski, and Kris Johnson

Discussion about future programs for the general meetings:

Mike Regimenti will speak to Tim Hickey about giving a talk on "Printing of Digital Photos with regard to Monitor Color Calibration" at either the April or May meeting. Fran Damratowski agreed to prepare a program about the "Care and Cleaning of Computers" at either the April, May or June meeting. Mike Regimenti agreed to inform the general meeting about Yahoo Groups at the same meeting as Fran's program. Karl Richmond will contact Dave Cunningham with hopes that he will be able to get a representative from Adobe to do a program at one of our upcoming meetings.

NEW BUSINESS

Using a phone number for Publicity:
Mike Young agreed that he would allow his phone number to be used for publicity purposes.

Mike Young stated that archivist is part of the secretary's duties. Mike Regimenti then gave the secretary the master copies of the "Printer".

Karl stated the labels for the "Printer" will be updated.

Karl will complete and send the Anne Arundel Parks and Recreation form as required by the AAPR.

The board voted and agreed 5 to 1 to obtain a credit card with a limit of \$2000 and no annual fee for

ChPCUG without taking out insurance to cover fraud or misuse of the card. Karl will apply for two Master Cards which should be received in 30-45 days.

Karl will check to see if the club will incur additional insurance costs if we include the Eastern Shore Computer Club as part of ChPCUG.

There was discussion concerning the possible offering of prizes at the General Meetings. No further action was taken.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Karl gave his monthly report and indicated that we are solvent.

The SIGS

Technology SIG

Next Technology SIG meeting will discuss Pre-N Wireless products.

CRSIG

Fran Damratowski gave a report on the CRSIG saying that 1187 computers have been delivered to date. See archives reports for a full account

Investment SIG

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday night, January 25th.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Kris Johnson
Secretary

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Microsoft releases IE 7 beta to public

by
Alorie Gilbert

Microsoft plans to take the wraps off Internet Explorer 7 on Tuesday, releasing the new “preview” version of its Web browser to the general public for testing.

The program, still a work in progress, will be available shortly for download from the Internet Explorer section of Microsoft’s corporate Web site, the company said. The company, which began limited testing in July, had promised to deliver a public beta by the end of March. “The big update is that it’s public,” said Margaret Cobb, group product manager for Internet Explorer at Microsoft. “All previous releases were limited.”

The latest version works only with Windows XP Service Pack 2 and includes many of the features Microsoft has been touting for months. Among them are new security and privacy protection capabilities such as mechanisms designed to combat phishing attacks, spyware and other threats.

Another new feature lets users clear their browsing history more easily thus wiping out passwords, form data and cookies in one click, the company said.

The new browser also includes tabbed browsing and a search box, concepts that should be familiar to users of Firefox, a rival browser distributed by the Mozilla Foundation.

Tabbed browsing lets users open multiple Web pages in a single browser window. Microsoft has tried to best Firefox with something called Quick Tabs. That feature provides an at-a-glance, thumbnail view of all open tabs in a single window.

In addition, the program is supposed to let users more easily subscribe to syndicated feeds from news and sports sites, blogs and stores. The browser detects feeds enabled by Real Simple Syndication, or RSS, technology, illuminating an icon on the toolbar. Users can preview, subscribe and scan syndicated headlines directly through the browser, Microsoft said.

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IE 7 also includes a number of new features for Web developers, including support for up-and-coming Web-programming technologies known collectively as AJAX.

Microsoft plans to release a final version of IE 7 later this year, around the time the company debuts the next version of its Windows operating system, Windows Vista.

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Hard Drive Failures - cont’d

drives are available in the exact same capacities as the desktop drives because they often use the same drives. The key is to only use the drive when backing up data or restoring it. This reduces the amount of time it is used and lessen the chance of failure.

Another option open to users, is to build a desktop PC with a version of RAID that has data redundancy built in. The simplest form of RAID to setup is RAID 0 or mirroring. This requires a RAID controller and two identically sized hard drives. All data written to one drive is automatically mirrored to the other. In the event of failure of one drive, the second drive will always have the data.

Conclusion

Hard drives in general are very reliable, but with the increasing amount we use our computers to store the data from our lives, the more catastrophic it becomes to have that data be lost from a drive failure. In general, the drives are not failing any faster than they have in the past, but with the increasing use of the drives, they are reaching their expected lifespan sooner. Because of this, it is important

CorelDRAW Graphics Suite X3

COMPANY	Corel Corporation http://www.corel.com
SPEC DATA	Type: Business, Personal Notes: \$399 direct; \$179 upgrade; \$99 Student and Teacher edition



BOTTOM LINE

It's not as strong as Adobe's offering, but it costs a lot less. With CorelDRAW Graphics Suite X3, budget-minded design professionals and business users get access to excellent graphics tools at an affordable price. Corel has added several features and enhancements to this already terrific package. If you didn't upgrade from version 11, now's the time to do it.

PROS Excellent, robust tool set; strong bitmap-to-vector conversion; greatly enhanced text features; new Image Adjustment Lab; lots of included goodies.

CONS No integrated RAW format support; many dockers don't update automatically.

PRICE \$99.00 - \$399.00

CorelDRAW Review

by
Galen Fott

✓ Editor's Rating:  \$99.00 - \$399.00

Professional graphic artists tend to use Adobe Illustrator (\$500 street) and Adobe Photoshop (\$650), high-dollar programs that deliver high-quality results. But even when bundled as part of Adobe's Creative Suite Standard (which also includes InDesign page layout software), the \$900 cost is too steep for many. But longtime users of CorelDRAW Graphics Suite have a secret—you can get excellent results with software that doesn't cost an arm and a leg.

The \$399 suite consists primarily of the vector drawing program CorelDRAW and the image editor PHOTO-PAINT. The new version, CorelDRAW Graphics Suite X3 (read "thirteen"), adds some strong new tools and refinements to an already excellent package.

Version 12 users will notice that two supporting applications seem to be missing. One, the vector animation program Corel R.A.V.E., is indeed no longer included. CorelTRACE (useful for converting bitmaps into vectors), though, only appears to be gone—it's actually been incorporated into the CorelDRAW application, and the technology is now called PowerTRACE.

This totally redesigned tool lets you turn pixel-based images like logos into resolution-free vector art, and it's the strongest new feature in the suite. PowerTRACE doesn't deliver quite the degree of control found in Illustrator CS2's similar new tool, but the before/after interface is easier to use, and the results are in roughly the same ballpark as what you'll get from Illustrator.

Hard Drive Failures - Are Drive Failures Increasing?

Introduction

Hard drive crashes are one of the most frustrating experiences one can have with a computer. The inability to read data off of the hard drive can render a computer useless. Even if the OS can run, the data may be inaccessible or damaged. The only way to recover from such a failure is to typically restore data from a backup onto a new drive with all the software installed from scratch. If no backup is available, then the data is either lost or will cost a lot for recovery services to retrieve.

This article is going to take a look at what causes hard drive failures, if failures are becoming more frequent and what steps one can take to try and avoid problems in the event of a failure.

Hard Drive Basics

Before understanding what can cause a failure, it is important to know the basics of how a hard drive functions. A hard drive is essentially a large device with magnetic storage media that is encased on rigid platters. This allows the drive to store large amounts of data that can be accessed and written to very quickly.

Every hard drive is comprised of several key components: case, drive motor, platters, drive heads and a logic board. The case provides protection for the drive in a sealed environment away from dust particles. The motor spins the drive up so the data can be read off the platters. The platters hold the magnetic media that stores the actual data. The drive heads are used to read and write the data to the platters. Finally the logic board controls how the drive interfaces and talks to the rest of the computer system.

For a more detailed look at what a hard drive is, I recommend reading the "How Hard Drives Work" from How Stuff Works [<http://compreviews.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=compreviews&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fcomputer.howstuffworks.com%2Fhard-disk.htm>].

Common Drive Failures

The most common failure for a hard drive is something called a head crash. A head crash is any instance where the drive head manages to touch a platter. When this happens, the magnetic media will be etched off of the platter by the head and render both the data and the drive head inoperable. There is no clean recovery from such a failure.

Another common failure comes from imperfections on the magnetic media. Any time that a sector on the disk fails to properly hold the magnetic alignment will cause data to be inaccessible. Typically drives will have a few of these located on the platter, but they are marked out of use by a low level format from the manufacturer. Later low level formats can be done to mark sectors as unusable so they will not be used, but this is a long process that erases all data from the drive.

Mobile systems tend to be prone to platters that shattered. This is due to the fact that most hard drive platters are made of glass and susceptible to shock. Most manufacturers have or are, switching to other materials, to prevent this from happening.

If there are electrical problems with the logic board, data on the drive can become unreadable or damaged. This is due to the logic board being unable to properly communicate between the computer system and the hard drive.

MTBF

In order for consumers to get a good idea of the lifespan of a hard drive, a drive was rated by something called MTBF. This term stands for Mean Time Between Failure and is used to represent the length of time that 50 percent of drives would fail before and 50 percent would fail after. It is used to give an idea to a buyer as to the average amount of

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Hard Drive Failures - cont'd

time the device will function for. This was typically listed by the manufacturers on all computer drives but in recent years it has been removed from all consumer drives. They are still listed for enterprise class hard drives.

Capacity vs. Reliability

Hard drive sizes have been increasing dramatically over the last few years. This is due to the increase in the density of data being stored on the platters and the number of platters that are being placed inside of a hard drive case. For example, most drives used to feature two or maybe three platters, but many now can have up to four total platters. This increase in the number of parts and the reduction in space has greatly reduced the tolerances that the drives have and increases the amount of possible chance of failure.

Are Drives More Prone to Failure Now?

A lot of this has to do with the construction and use of hard drives. Most consumer computers were used only a few hours per day. This meant that the drives did not have as long continuous use, that increase factors such as heat and movement, which can lead to failures. Computers are much more prevalent in our lives and are being used for longer periods. This means that drives are likely failing more frequently due to heavier use. After all, a computer used twice as long as another will generally have a hard drive fail twice as quickly. So this hasn't really increased the failure rate.

Of course, factors such as the increase in data density and number of platters may also be contributing to the chances of hard drive failure.

The more parts and the tighter the density of the data on the platters means that there are more things that can potentially go wrong to cause data loss or a failure. To counter this, technology has been improving. Better motors, chemical composition of the media and other materials means that failures that used to happen due to these parts are less likely to occur.

There is no hard evidence that failures are occurring more frequently. From my own experience, I have not seen an increase in the number of drives failing, but other people that I work with have seen a fair number of drives in their computers have problems. This is anecdotal evidence though.

Warranties may be a good indicator of how the industry is dealing with reliability. After the dark days surrounding the infamous Deskstar problems, many manufacturers were reducing warranties. Before this, the typical warranty was three years in length, but many companies switched to one year warranties. Now companies are typically offering three to five year long warranties meaning that they must have confidence in their drives as they are costly to replace.

What to Do in Case of Drive Failure?

The biggest problem with a drive failure is the amount of data that can be lost. With the increase in the number of digital devices that we use and resulting data being stored on our computer systems, it is much more disruptive to our lives to have it destroyed. Data recovery from damaged drives can range from several hundred dollars to several thousand. Data recovery services aren't flawless either. A head crash will likely remove the magnetic media from the platter, destroying the data forever.

There is no real way to prevent a drive failure either. Even the most reputable and reliable brand can have a drive that fails rapidly. As a result, it is best to try and plan for an event that will cause the primary data drive to fail with data backups. There is a wide range of backup methods available. For some tips on this, check out the About Focus on PC Support Guide's Data Backup articles [<http://pcsupport.about.com/od/backupyourdata/index.htm>].

One simple tip I like to suggest to people, is portable hard drives. They are fairly inexpensive and due to their limited use, are less likely to fail when properly stored and handled. External hard

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**The Next Regular Meeting will be at
The Severn River Middle School**

**Wednesday,
February 8th, 2006
Meeting will be held in the large meeting
room.**

**It starts at 7:00 PM with club business
and a short discussion period.**

There will be Presentations on

Wireless Home Networking

**Members and their friends are welcome to
come, ask questions and become enlightened.**

How to Find: Severn River Middle School

SRMS is close to the Arnold, MD campus of the Anne Arundel Community College. From Annapolis and parts south, take Rte 2 (Ritchie Highway) north about 3 miles from the intersection of Rt. 50, **turn right on College Parkway**. At the first light, turn left on Peninsula Farm Road. (Of course, if you are coming from points North, you would turn left on to College Parkway) about a half-mile down the road the large SRMS school building, set back off a large two level parking lot, will be visible on your right. Park here and go to the main entrance. Signs will be posted to direct you to the **Large Group Room** where we will be meeting.

How to find: The Technology SIG, A ChPCUG Special Interest Group**

Meets the 1st Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM

The meetings are held at the SRMS in the Library.



Chesapeake PC Users Group

1783 Forest Drive #285

Annapolis, MD 21401

FIRST CLASS

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IE 7 beta release

... and a little more!

Note: The date above your name on the mailing label is the expiration date of your membership. Contact the Membership Chairman (page 2, column 2) to update.