

DEAD HARD DRIVE? ALL IS **NOT** LOST!

How often have you heard or read that someone's computer hard drive was "destroyed by a virus" (virtually impossible), or was so badly damaged that it was rendered useless by their technician? Neither is true. First of all, there has yet to be discovered a virus that will cause physical damage to hardware....unless someone clever out there has found a way to do so....and how come we haven't heard about it? Nevertheless, there are unscrupulous repair people everywhere who will happily tell a naïve customer that they need hours of investigation to find out the cause and at the end tell them the only way to "repair" their computer is to throw it out...your data and everything saved on it. While it is true that viruses can overwrite the PC's boot sector and render it inoperable, the magnetic media that stores data is still intact. Virus makers are in the business of obtaining your personal information, getting into your bank and email accounts, and finding out all they can about you, as well as just creating mischief and havoc. Your hard drive needs to remain active in order for their nasty schemes to thrive.

Another cause for hard drive malfunction is that it was bad to begin with. In this case, most manufacturers will not take them back: it costs them money to ship, store and replace – more than they could make selling a new one. One thing to consider too is once you send your hard drive in for repair, you run the risk of losing all your personal data stored and if you replace it, you probably won't get your old one back (e.g. Apple will replace a part if it is under warranty but will not give you your original part back.). Therefore, the burden of keeping backup copies falls on the consumer.

So let's assume that the customer believes the "virus-destroying" cause and agrees to toss out the "bad" hard drive and get a new one, what happens to your prized personal data? Many people in this situation believe there is no recovery possible and proceed with the disposal of their hard drive, be it by merely throwing it in the trash, or by physically smashing it with a hammer. In this position, the latter option is the best because you are physically destroying this piece of hardware into smithereens. The data stored on this drive is still there, available for anyone who knows how to access and use it. By merely tossing the drive into the "recycle" bin the user has left him/herself vulnerable to real trouble.

But the one thing to bear in mind is that in most situations personal data IS recoverable. Only experienced technicians will be willing to undertake this lengthy process (some recovery times last 2-3 days) but the end result is the resurrection of the files that matter most to you – many times containing irreplaceable photos and documents.

