Security for Portable Computers

Loss Control CFLC

Portable computers are a prime target for thieves, especially in airports, hotels, offices, and automobiles. Recent FBI statistics show that one of every ten laptop computers is stolen. The object of theft is not always the computer equipment but the information that will allow access to private networks and systems. All types of computing and data processing equipment are viable targets: laptop computers, handheld and palm units, GPS devices, digital cameras and recorders, RAM chips, electronic notebooks, etc. Whether traveling for business or pleasure, working at home or in the office, take precautionary measures to protect this investment of time, data, and equipment.

Corporate Responsibility

- Establish a written policy specifying how employees should secure, ship, store, and travel with laptops. Delineate employees' obligations – financial or otherwise – if failure to comply results in a loss. Some businesses handle it as a performance issue.
- Label all laptops with inventory or serial numbers.
- Have employees sign and date statements acknowledging possession of equipment.

High Tech Security Devices

Several security devices are designed for portable electronic equipment, such as:

- Software-based transmitters that send homing signals for tracking and monitoring.
- Two-piece anti-theft systems (key chain transmitter and receiver-alarm)
- PC tab alarm system that protects RAM on any type of PC case (chassis and cover)
- Cable lock system (anchor point and key lock unit)
- Tracking and retrieval recovery service (monitors equipment via dial-up connection or satellite)

Individual Responsibility

- Adhere to company policies and procedures.
- Keep equipment in a secure location or within sight.
- Lock it up or take it with you when you go out to lunch or to a meeting.
- Maintain a regular data back-up cycle.
- Minimize storage on the hard drive of proprietary, damaging, or incriminating data.

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- When shipping the laptop, insure to value, and back up data. Consider that it might not be received or returned.
- Keep a record of the make, model, and serial number of the computer in the event it is stolen.
- Use a two-tiered password system or data encryption to protect information on the hard drive.

When Traveling

- Carry the laptop in a nondescript case, that does not readily identify it as a computer.
- Don't let the laptop out of your sight. Use the hotel safe to secure items when they are not in use.
- At off-site meetings, ensure that portable computers are secure during breaks.
- Be alert to your surroundings as someone might be watching and waiting for an opportunity.
- Beware of common scams in which someone distracts you while an accomplice takes the computer.
- Never leave a laptop in sight in an unattended vehicle. Do not put it in the trunk unless absolutely necessary.
- At airport security, take the laptop out of its case and hand it to the guard, then walk through the metal detector.
- Never check a laptop as luggage. If it is not stolen, it may be damaged be rough handling.

For more information, contact your local Hartford agent or your Hartford Loss Control Consultant. Visit The Hartford's Loss Control web site at http://www.thehartford.com/corporate/losscontrol/

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