

Re: House on Fire... Do You Rescue the Computer?

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In article <57d414lmvgj5rus89ohoa1p1saikpesouc@xxxxxxx>, D from BC <myrealaddress@xxxxxxx> wrote:

What can I do to protect my PC from a house fire?

Your PC, or the data on it?

Step one is to take actual steps to reduce the likelihood of fires – reduce clutter, especially clutter that burns. Live the Danish Modern lifestyle, and fire has a hard time getting a hold. Difficult for most real people to manage.

Step two along that line would be to absolutely minimize or eliminate burnables (paper, upholstery, drapes, carpets, wood etc.) in the particular room where the computer is, replace the door with a 2 hour fire rated door, and add an extra layer or two (fully mudded and taped) of 5/8 inch fire code gypsum board to the walls and ceiling. DO the floor in ceramic tile or something like that. Also do the same to any rooms below that room, and install sprinklers in the rooms and hallways outside and below that room. There are comparatively low-cost residential sprinklers on the market, though retrofitting is always going to be spendy, while adding them to new construction is not too bad, cost-wise – especially if you get a break on your insurance because of them.

While you're spending your millions, might as well put a halon system in the room itself, though in point of fact, local authorities might not be happy with that in a residence. As the resident, you should question the advisability of it as well.

So, build a little concrete shack out in the yard and move the computer there. Put nothing that can burn in the shack.

Some people try running an external hard drive inside of a data-rated fire safe. I don't know how much compromise the cable makes on the fire safe's function, and do choose only a data rated one – the paper ones

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get very hot and humid inside in a fire, as I understand it.

Iffen it's the data more than the PC itself, and you have something like a separate garage (or a concrete shack in the yard...) you could set up a server out there. It should be possible to mirror the content of a server in the house and a server in the garage, so that both structures would have to go to lose your data. Doesn't help that much if they are the same building. Perhaps a "doghouse" set away from the house, or a storm cellar, or that fallout shelter your parents put in in the 1950's.

Offsite backup copies are also good if you do them religiously, and check that they are readable religiously. If your offsite backups consist of 3 weeks of data from 1993 when you got the backup bug, and then lost it again, they are not very helpful. Consider all sorts of issues in choosing a place for them – flooding, fire, etc. A safety deposit box at the bank is one possible place that offers a range of security against many disasters, but if the bank floods, it's not such a great choice.

If you're dead, the PC and/or the data on it are largely immaterial. So if it's a question of getting out, or messing about trying to grab computer, disk, external drive, backup CDs, whatever – get out. If that stuff is on the way and takes essentially no time to grab, sure, grab it. Otherwise, leave it and get out. If leaving it would upset you, get the offsite backup bug and keep it. Make a habit of putting your on-site backups in a place they can easily be grabbed on the way out the door. The hardware is replaceable.

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Cats, coffee, chocolate...vices to live by
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