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Disaster Prevention Checklist Backup Strategies and Options

The backup procedure is often overlooked but remains a critical component of all data management systems. Since computer systems can experience problems and failures, having an effective backup plan in place can increase the ability of your organization to survive a disaster. Below is a compilation of information to help you assess your current disaster recovery status.

Why Backup?



Loss of data costs you plenty of time and money, and halts the ability of an organization to conduct its activities. For many businesses, any significant interruption in its operations can lead to its demise. Therefore, an effective recovery plan should be in place to expedite the resumption of activities. Such a plan should include a data backup routine.

The types of disasters that any business may need to overcome include:

- ✓ **Environmental** - damage from harsh weather such as tornados, hurricanes, flooding, etc.
- ✓ **Facilities** - loss due to fire, collapse of building, terrorism.
- ✓ **Computer Failures** - faulty hardware, software, or viruses that cause the loss of data.



Backup Media Options Compared

There are several methods of backing up your systems. Each is suited to different situations. The following is a comparison of the options:

Media Type	Storage Space	Advantages	Disadvantages	Ideal Uses
CD RW (Compact Disc)	0.65 GB	Optical storage method helps prevent accidental erasure.	Doesn't hold much data.	Low volume, individual documents.
DVD	4.5 GB	Optical storage method helps prevent accidental erasure.	Doesn't hold much data.	Small system backups, large data files.
Digital Tape	20 - 60 GB	Large storage capacity. Faster writing time.	Magnetic storage method is more susceptible to environmental conditions resulting in higher risk of data corruption.	Entire system backup, network based backup of several workstations.
Off-Site Service	100's of GB	Virtually limitless amount of capacity. Backup is immediately offsite.	Dependent upon Internet or direct connection. Data transmission can be very slow.	Entire system backup, network based backup of several workstations.

Backup Plan Checklist

- Backup what you cannot afford to lose.** Most of the time this just means the documents and data files that store your critical information. However, with some systems the process of re-installing software and then configuring them to pre-disaster status would take a huge amount of time. In these cases, backing up the entire computer system would be more appropriate.
- Backup frequently.** Backups should be conducted on a frequency that is based on what you can afford to lose if you had to recover data. For instance, backing up once a week means that you could lose an entire week's worth of data if the disaster happened just prior to the scheduled backup. Most systems are set to backup daily. In some situations, you may want to backup more than once each day.
- Rotate back up media.** The backups themselves can have failures or get worn out. It's important to have more than one item that contains the backup of your system. You should have a minimum of three backup sets and, preferably, five. The more you have, the better. Normally, one cycle through each backup set on a regular basis. For instance, backup set one contains the daily backups of one week, followed by backup set two for the next week, followed by backup set three. The process then repeats. In some cases, you may want to have multiple backup sets active at the same time.
- Keep a recent backup away from your premises.** Place at least one backup set at a location that is not in the same building where your system resides. This enables you to recover from a disaster that affects the building in which you work. A building and the computers inside can be replaced, but if the backup remained in the same building during the disaster, then your backup data also perishes.
- Automate the backup process.** Backups should be conducted automatically. This will prevent forgetfulness or distractions from interfering with the consistent repetition of the backup process.

An effective backup system is cheap insurance. Protect the investment in your custom database systems by backing up the information stored in the database. At Database by Design, we know that any system is only as good as the information it manages. We strongly encourage you to have an effective backup strategy in place.

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