

# Before the Storm

## Protecting Your Data and Technology from Water Damage



### Plan Ahead

As a new storm season approaches, it's a good idea to have a preparedness plan in place. While common sense tells us that water and computer equipment are a bad combination, few people make plans to protect their equipment from water damage. The result can be disastrous.

The most important aspect in any emergency situation is to make sure that you and your family are safe and out of harm's way. However, by planning now, you can safeguard the safety of your electronic equipment and irreplaceable data, as well. Well before the first storm clouds gather, you need to begin by taking inventory. This inventory should include your equipment as well as your data. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Which computer keeps most of the organization's/family's data on it? This might include pictures, important documents, tax information, and so forth.

- Are individual employees/family members responsible for backing up their computers on a regular basis?
- Who is responsible for taking the backups or equipment to a secure location?
- Has each employee/family member filled out a plan of action form for his/her equipment?

### Create a Plan of Action

In an emergency, typically the last thing on your mind is your devices! By taking a few minutes now, you can prevent major headaches later on and get your operation back up and running more quickly. Use the simple plan of action below, create your own, or request one from your local police/emergency management agency. Remember to keep the plan where you can get to it easily and quickly during an emergency.

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### Sample Plan of Action

Item Description	Location/Owner	Serial Number	Action to Take
1. _____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____	_____

Primary contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Have a Plan B

Whether you are facing the threat of severe weather or the more everyday threat of leaky pipes, having a plan B for your data is essential. A good plan B will include an external, portable backup or cloud backup. What's an external backup? An external backup is a backup of your data to a portable device like a DVD, external hard drive, or jump drive. With cloud backups, the data is backed up to a server over an internet connection. The great thing about cloud backups is that they are already safely out of harm's way during a storm, so you don't have to worry about moving your data! With many cloud backup companies, you can choose to have the backups happen automatically, or you can manually backup your data to a cloud service such as Dropbox or Google Drive.

### *How do I backup my computer to a USB drive?*

1. Plug the drive into a USB port on your computer.
2. The **found new hardware** window will appear. Allow it to finish detecting the USB drive. The window will then disappear.
3. Right-click on the **My Documents** folder. In the pop-up window, click **copy**.
4. Go to the **computer** icon on your desktop and double-click.
5. In the **computer** window, you will see a **removable disk** icon. Double-click on it.
6. In the **removable disk** window, click **edit** from the tool bar. In the drop-down menu, click **paste**. Your documents will now be copied over to your drive. The amount of time this takes depends on how much data you have and the USB you are using.

You can repeat this process for any document or folder on your computer. Once you are done, simply unplug the drive from the computer. It is important that you keep your backup in a separate location, away from your computer. Otherwise, if something happens to your computer, it will likely happen to the drive, too. A good place to keep it could be your car because your car will usually be close in an emergency.

### *How do I back up my Apple device? (as of iOS 11.2.2)*

1. Open **settings**.
2. Choose **Accounts & Passwords**.
3. Choose **iCloud**.
4. Tap **iCloud Backup**.
5. Tap **Backup Now** (note that, below the Backup Now button, you can see when your last successful backup was).

### *How do I back up my Android device? (as of Android Version 7.0 Nougat)*

1. Open **settings**.
2. Choose **Cloud and Accounts**.
3. Choose **Backup and Restore**.
4. Tap **Backup settings**.
5. Tap **Backup now** (each section will tell you the last date it was backed up).

## Take It with You

If you have enough warning, you can plan to take certain equipment with you. Don't try to take everything with you—remember you'll need room for clothes, pets, food, and family members! Take only what you need or those items that are small and easy to store. Listed below are some suggestions to take with you. Charge them beforehand if time allows. It's a good idea to keep a large plastic "to go box" on hand, so all you have to do is drop the items in the box and go.

- External storage device
- Laptops with power supply
- Cell phones with chargers
- iPads/tablets/e-readers
- Hand-crank or solar charger

## If You Can't Take It with You

There is no way you will be able to take all of your electronics with you! Besides, who would want to? In the event that you cannot take the equipment with you, you will need to make plans to secure it. Follow these steps:

1. Turn off anything electronic.
2. Unplug all electronics.
3. Look around for any electronic equipment on the floor, and move it onto a desk, counter, or closet shelf (off of the floor).

4. Wrap the equipment in a plastic bag, and use tape to seal the opening.

## Stuff It, Stow It, Save It

If there is adequate time available to prepare for a potential threat, here are some additional steps you can take to help ensure your equipment makes it through in working order.

### Desktop Computers

1. Back up all documents, photos, and other important files to an external hard drive or cloud storage.
2. Label the computer with your contact information.
3. Put the computer in a trash bag (the thicker, the better). Seal the bag with tape (duct tape if possible) or a zip tie.
4. Move the computer to higher ground, such as on a desk or counter. Do not stack more than two computers high.

### Laptop Computers

1. If possible, take the laptop with you when you leave.
2. If you can't take it with you, place the laptop in its carrying case.
3. Put the laptop in a trash bag (the thicker, the better). Seal the bag with tape (duct tape if possible) or a zip tie.
4. Move the computer to higher ground, such as on a desk or counter. Laptops are lightweight, so make sure they are properly secured, but do not put anything heavy on top of them.

### Monitors

1. Place a soft cloth over the glass screen of the monitor.
2. Put the monitor in a trash bag (the thicker, the better). Seal the bag with tape (duct tape if possible) or a zip tie.
3. Store it screen side down in a secure, raised location.

### Printers

1. Take the paper out of the paper trays.
2. If it is a small printer, put it in a trash bag and seal the bag.
3. If it is a large printer, cover it with a trash bag.

### iPads, Tablets, and e-Readers

1. Take it with you when you leave.
2. If you cannot take it with you, place it in a Ziploc bag.
3. Make sure you put the charger in the bag with it.
4. Label the bag and place it in your go box.

### CDs/DVDs/Blu-ray Discs

1. Place them in your go box to take with you.
2. Place them in a sealed Ziploc bag.
3. Put discs in their hard cases if possible.

*Remember: the more layers you put between your equipment and the elements, the better chance you have of recovering your important information!*

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