

Computer users should take steps to strengthen the protection of personal information on laptops and PCs

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“Consumers should think seriously about using some means of encryption for storing sensitive information on their laptops and PCs,” says security consultant Steve Cornish.

“The news* that some unscrupulous repair shops have been caught browsing customers’ data highlights the risks of being complacent about storing personal information on a computer. Criminals will go after any opportunity to steal information that can be turned into cash – either by fraud or simply by threatening embarrassment.”

Businesses mindful of their reputation will have implemented some form of policy for data security based on a risk analysis. Apart from legal requirements, they have a duty of care to ensure confidentiality of information relating to their customers and employees. Home users should also be more aware of the risks involved if personal information should ever fall into the wrong hands.”

The problems can occur however when a PC or laptop moves out of the immediate control of the user – either for disposal or repair. In the event of a fault occurring during normal operation, it may be too late to remove sensitive data from the hard drive.

The most effective protection is to install a form of encryption which allows a higher level of security for the storage of information held within computers.

One example suitable for home users and small businesses is DataGuard, a software application marketed by Security IP of Banbury. Designed for use with Windows, the technology provides professional levels of encryption to protect folders and files on desktops, laptops, USB sticks and any other removable storage media.

“In my opinion, encryption of file and folders is not only a practical alternative but also a very effective additional layer of protection to whole disc encryption,” says Steve Cornish.

“The disadvantage of whole disk encryption is that you may well have to give your password to the repairer which means he has access to all the data on the machine. An even more secure approach would be to use file and folder encryption in conjunction with whole disk. This would provide the ultimate data protection.”

About Security IP:

Based in Oxfordshire, Security IP is a specialist value-added distributor specialising in client and server security solutions for organisations of all sizes. Applications cover virus protection, firewall and virtual private networks, intrusion detection, web and e-mail filtering, and remote management technologies. www.securityip.com

*Sky News Report – See

<http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/UK-News/Sky-News-Undercover-Laptop-Investigation-Repair-Shops-Caught-Hacking-Int>
ENDS

Issued by:

Mike Ottewell
MJO PR for Security IP
mike@mjo-marketingeditorial.co.uk
Tel: 01782 664 886

Enquiries to:

Steve Cornish
Security IP
scornish@securityip.com
Tel: 0845 125 9092