

Mother Board

Volume 23. Issue 10

October 12, 2005

This Month's NOPCC

Topic

**“Where
Do We Go
From Here?
Rebuilding our
Club and Our
City”**

RECOVERY

As the waters receded; as the power came back on; as security was lifted, the citizens of New Orleans and the surrounding parishes returned to pick up the pieces of their homes and their lives. Some fared better than others in the amount of damage done to their homes and property. For some the emotional strain of the rebuilding process will cause them to “look for greener pastures”, but for others the desire to rebuild is strong and the rebuilding has begun.

On October 12, 2005, the Board of Directors of the New Orleans Personal Computer Club will hold a Director’s meeting at McCann’s Electronics, 100 Division Street, Metairie, LA in the offices of McCann’s at 6:30 pm to begin the task of recovering from the damaged done by Katrina to the club.

The General Membership meeting site, J.D. Meisler School suffered some damage to its gymnasium, which is adjacent to the cafeteria. If the club is unable to use this site for any extended period of time, the BOD will be looking at an alternate meeting location. If you know of any locations that might be suitable be contact one of the Board Members either by phone or e-mail. Refer to the last page of the Motherboard for this contact information.

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Here is a really good site with pictures from the aftermath of the storm. Turn up your speakers. You don't need to scroll down, it's a picture show.....
<http://www.katrinattribution.info/>

Maxine on "Driver Safety" "I can't use the cell phone in the car. I have to keep my hands free for making gestures."

Maxine on "Lawn Care" "The key to a nice-looking lawn is a good mower. I recommend one who is muscular and shirtless."

Maxine on "Technology Revolution" "My idea of rebooting is kicking somebody in the butt twice."

Recovering data from flooded hard drives

by
Jerry Seregni
Eyewitness Morning News
Technology Analyst

I arrived in Baton Rouge Sunday, after spending two weeks hopping from one motel to another in Mississippi. It's good to be back working on "Digital Gumbo" for the Eyewitness Morning News.

While I was on the road, there were two recurring events. My hotel reservations always seemed to be figments of my imagination, and evacuees were always asking me what was going to happen to the files on the computers they left behind -- computers that were now underwater.

Many were worried about losing wedding photos or pictures of their grandchildren. Others were concerned about PCs containing employee records, tax data, or other files they needed to get their businesses back up and running.

Data Recovery

Ironically, before the storm hit, I was working on a segment about data recovery. The topic was inspired by Eric Paulsen, whose computer sustained a massive hard drive failure around Easter. Eric had hundreds of digital photos, his music collection, contact lists, and other important files stored on the drive, and he didn't have a backup.

I was searching the Web for a disk repair utility when I found Recover It All!, a low-level disk tool developed by a company called DtiData in Clearwater, Florida.

Recover It All! is designed to recover files if a disk's subsystem (partition tables, file allocation tables, etc.) is damaged, but it couldn't help Eric. The software can't fix a drive that is physically damaged, and unbeknownst to me, Paulsen's drive had been zapped by a power spike. I continued my search, trying one utility after another, not realizing I was actually doing more harm than good.

I finally called DtiData's tech support line on a Sun-

day, when another pass with Recover It All Pro produced strange results. A technician told me that a bad motor was most likely the cause, but to be sure, he would have "Dave" call me the next day. It was clear that "Dave" was the company's guru, and as I learned the next day, much more.

Simply put, Dave Mohyla is the extremely knowledgeable, plain-talking data recovery specialist who owns DtiData. He is also a heck of a nice guy.

Talking to Mohyla for a few minutes is a crash course in data recovery. It was clear that 'throwing the kitchen sink' at Eric's drive probably caused more data loss than the power spike itself. The reason, according to DtiData's head guy, was because most hard disk repair utilities are designed to make the drive bootable, not preserve data.

Mohyla suggested sending the drive to Florida so he could inspect it in his clean room. I thought it would cost a fortune, but DtiData's prices were less expensive than quotes for data recovery I had encountered in the past.

Happily, Mohyla and his team were able to recover many of the files, despite my misguided efforts. Eric had his files back, and I had found a great resource in case I ever had to deal with a failed hard drive again.

Dave Mohyla and DtiData's contact information promptly went into my address book.

Rescuing Data on Flooded Hard Drives

When the Eyewitness Morning News talked to me Wednesday about doing a "Digital Gumbo" segment about water-damaged computers, you can guess who I called.

Mohyla told me he was already receiving shipments of hard drives from computers in the New Orleans area. I was surprised to hear most of the drives were full of water, but I soon learned it's to be expected. When I asked him what hope I could give viewers whose computers were victims of all the flooding in the New Orleans area, here is what he told me:

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Digital Gumbo (DG): Dave, hard drives from computers flooded by Hurricane Katrina are already showing up on your doorstep. Is the data stored on those hard drives lost for good?

Dave Mohyla (DM): First, let me say that I wish we were talking again under different circumstances. All of us here in the Tampa area have the victims of Hurricane Katrina in our thoughts. Hurricanes threaten this area too.

DG: I know that, and I also remember your telling me about how your company did data recovery for hundreds of hard drives damaged when Hurricane Ivan devastated the island of Grand Cayman last year. What can you tell the victims of Hurricane Katrina about the prospects of recovering data from a hard drive that has been underwater?

DM: When dealing with a flood-damaged hard drive, the first thing to keep in mind is: don't assume your data is lost. A large percentage of flood- and storm-damaged hard drive data can be recovered if proper steps are taken during and prior to recovery.

DG: What are some of those steps?

DM Hard drives are sealed with rubber gaskets, and the top of the hard drive is secured by screws, tightened with a certain amount of torque. Hard drives, however, are not hermetically sealed -- not completely. There are taped seals on both sides of the hard drive and some space, albeit small, where water can enter if the drive is submerged. Positive pressure created by the velocity of the platters spinning creates a very sterile environment for the hard drive to operate. Unfortunately, when the drive is not spinning, the positive pressure isn't available to counteract the pressure of the water. The seals can't repel the water and the contaminants, so a hard disk submerged for a prolonged period of time will usually have water inside the drive housing.

DG: But if I understand you correctly, the fact that there's water inside the housing doesn't necessarily mean the data is unrecoverable. How is that possible?

DM: The key is proper handling. First, do not attempt to power up visibly-damaged PC. Even if the computer case appears not to have been flooded, you should examine the inside of the case carefully before you apply power. Powering on a PC that has been contaminated by flood waters is not only dangerous, it may also destroy the data. If the data on the hard disk is valuable, you are taking a tremendous risk if you power up the PC to see if it will boot.

DG: Okay, let's assume I know my PC was underwater, and there's water in the hard drive housing. If I try to remove the drive, won't the water inside be splashing all over the place?

DM: Yes, but it would be far worse if you shake the drive or try to disassemble a drive that's been damaged. Do not attempt to clean or dry water-logged hard drives. Do not try to dry out the media and then apply power. Hard drive heads fly just microns above the media on a pocket of air generated by the velocity of the platters spinning at high velocity. Any internal disturbance of this process can make the media unrecoverable.

DG: So putting a hard drive under a 1000W blow dryer or out in the sun for a couple of hours isn't recommended?

DM: Definitely not. Drying a hard drive could cause contaminates to further adhere to the platters. I don't want to sound like I'm trying to drum up business, but you really should consult a data recovery specialist for instructions how to properly ship a hard drive with wet or damp media. Most will tell you that it should be placed in a container that will keep the drive damp but protect the shipping material from getting wet. That's important, because wet cardboard cartons can break apart during shipping and cause more damage to the drive.

DG: Data recovery isn't cheap. Is there any kind of software you can run in lieu of sending a flooded computer's hard disk to a data recovery specialist?

DM: Definitely not. Don't try to use data recovery software on media that has been involved with flood

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NOPCC Directory

Elected Officers

President	Ray Paternostro	president@nopc.org	737-9099
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Secretary	Carl Henderson	secretary@nopc.org	466-3954
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Director At Large	Mary Prinz	director2@nopc.org	455-1412
Director At Large	Tom Ford	director3@nopc.org	985-643-3172

Standing Committees

BBS SysOp	Lanny Goldfinch	sysop@nopc.org	482-5066
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Public Relations	Jeannie Okamoto	pr@nopc.org	455-0977
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Internet	Ray Paternostro	internet-m@nopc.org	737-9099
New Users	Tom Ford	new-user-m@nopc.org	985-643-3172
Web Lab	Edward Jahncke	editor@nopc.org	269-651-5050

Other Important Numbers / Addresses

Club Hotline	Recorded messages. Meeting Information. Open 24 Hours	454-6166
NOPCC BBS	Bulletin Board System for members. The original way to PC communicate.	486-7261
NOPCC Web Site	On the World Wide Web. Our own home page and club information.	www.nopc.org

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or storm damage. Software programs are for use on hard drives or other media in good working order. Again, I don't want to sound like a commercial, but DtiData has a lot of experience with this type of recovery. We are registered with FEMA and work with insurance companies all the time. We will also give victims of Hurricane Katrina a discount. Furthermore, if you've have something like 100 water-damaged drives, we can come to your location, with the proper materials to transport the drives, and pick them up. At DtiData, many of our clients come to us as the result of some kind of tragedy -- fire, flood, or storm. We can't recover their data for free, but we try to work with people as much as we can.

[Note: Dave Mohyla can be reached at info@dtidata.com]

Source:Digital Gumbo – WWL-TV
<http://www.wwltv.com/gumbo/>

Editor:

I apologize to our advertisers. The files on my laptop here in Michigan are limited. I should be able to get back into New Orleans by the weekend of October 22, at which time I will be able to download the necessary files.

We hope to restore the Motherboard to its full size for the November issue.

Your patience is appreciated.



If you woke
 up breathing
 congratulations!
 You have
 another chance