

CUSTOMER FOCUS ON LOSS CONTROL

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Security for Portable Computers

Portable computers are a prime target for thieves, especially in airports, hotels, offices, and automobiles. They are easy to conceal, easy to “fence,” and in great demand.

Business travelers should take extra precautions with laptop, pentop and notebook computers. Suggestions for safeguarding while traveling include :

- Carry the portable computer in a nondescript case, such as a briefcase, that does not readily identify it as a computer.
- Try to keep the computer visible at all times. Do not leave it visible in your hotel room.
- Beware of common distraction scams in which someone jostles you, asks for the time or change, or “accidentally” spills something on you while an accomplice takes the computer.
- Never leave a laptop in an unattended vehicle. In addition, don’t put it in the trunk unless absolutely necessary. Someone may be observing you.
- Never check a laptop as luggage. If it is not stolen, it may be damaged by rough handling.
- At airport security checkpoints, try to keep the computer in sight. Usually, it is best to take it out of the case and hand it to the security guard while you walk through the metal detector.
- Lock it up or take it with you when you go out to lunch or to a meeting.
- Keep a record of the make, model, and serial number of the computer in the event it is stolen.
- Some businesses establish financial responsibility for preventable theft of portable computers. Others treat it as a performance issue. Either method instills greater employee responsibility.
- At off-site meetings, ensure that portable computers are secure during lunch and breaks. Ask security staff to lock the room when the group leaves.

The disruption caused by lost or stolen equipment can be very costly to a corporation. While a portable computer can be replaced, it can be extremely difficult to restore the information it contains. Sensitive financial, human resource, or personal information can be stored in the computer or accessible through it. In the wrong hands, this data can be used against individuals and/or the company.

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