NUIT Tech Talk:
Protecting Privacy – Safe Disposal of Computers and Information

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Agenda

• Safe disposal practices for computers and information:
  – Removing files and folders
  – Disposing of computers
  – Disposing of other electronic devices
• Guidelines for disposing of University-owned computers and equipment
• Northwestern’s **Computer and Peripherals Recycling Program**
February 13, 2004

- CBS-2 did an expose on the University of Illinois – Chicago Medical School
- They had been dumping broken and surplus computer equipment.
- Many of the machines were completely functional.
- None of the Hard drives had been wiped, and many contained confidential patient information.
The Problem

• 5 or more toxic materials in most electronic devices.
  – Lead, Mercury, Cadmium, Hexavalent Chromium, Brominated Flame retardants

• In normal use, a computer, cell phone or other electronic device containing toxic materials is not dangerous. However, we can create risks to the environment and to our health when we dispose of these electronic devices.
The Hazards

- Toxic Metals can accumulate in various organs, interfere with normal function of the body’s cells, and cause illness and in severe cases, death.
- Exposure can occur through inhalation, ingestion of soil and food, and chromium can also be absorbed through the skin.
- Toxic metals are persistent, meaning that they are not naturally broken down in the environment and remain toxic indefinitely.
Safe Disposal Techniques
Removing Files and Folders

• Deleting files is not enough
• File-shredding is best way to permanently destroy unwanted information on your computer
  – Shredding is file-specific
  – Remember… data may continue to exist in other locations on your computer

• File-shredding products:
  • SecureClean ($)
  • Eraser (free)
Safely Disposing of Computers

- Reformatting is not enough
- There are two ways to permanently remove information from a computer:
  - Clean the hard disk using software
  - Physically shred hard disk
    - Tedious
    - Time-consuming
    - Physical shredders are available at office stores and online
Hard Disk Cleaning

- Hard disk cleaning ("wiping") is the best way to remove information from a computer
  - Works like a file-shredder, but destroys all information on the disk
  - Overwrites every block of information with data.
  - Use industry standard "wiping" process
    - Department of Defense (DoD) standard (5220.22-M)
  - Products:
    - White Canyon Wipe Drive ($)
    - Active KillDisk (free)
    - DBAN (open source)
Disposing of Information in Other Formats

- Handheld devices
  - Hard resets
  - Special tools
- iPods
- Media
DSS Can Help!

• Services:
  – Installation of shredder software
  – Preparation of computers for disposal or redeployment

• Call 847-491-HELP (4357)
  – Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

• Users can also request service via the DSS Online Help Request Form at any time
  – Expect a response within 24 hours
  – www.tss.northwestern.edu/DSS/Help
Online Help Request Form

www.tss.northwestern.edu/DSS/Help/
Questions?
Guidelines for Disposing of University-owned Computers and Equipment
Policy: Disposal of Northwestern University Computers

http://www.it.northwestern.edu/policies/disposal.html
Removing Data

• It’s a good idea to make certain that any personally identifiable information is removed from your system before handing over to the University.

• If a computer is being redeployed to another employee or department, contact Distributed Support Services or your technical support person.

• If a computer is being removed from University ownership, use the Computer and Peripheral Recycling Program.
Software and Licenses

• If a computer will be redistributed, original operating system installation disks should be passed along with it
• In most cases, NUIT Site-Licensed Software should be retained by the original user
• These licenses generally do not transfer with computers where they are installed
Special Considerations

• If equipment was purchased with federal funds, get approval from the Accounting Services for Research and Sponsored Programs (ASRSP) for disposal
  – See http://www.northwestern.edu/asrsp/ for details

• If equipment has an inventory tag, report it to the Accounting Services Equipment Inventory Coordinator
  – E-mail r-glick@northwestern.edu
Computer and Peripherals Recycling Program

http://www.univsvcs.northwestern.edu/computer_pickup/index.htm
Recycle It!

- The recycling service offers data removal at no charge
- Recycling helps Northwestern meet Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines for equipment disposal
- It’s easy - Just fill out the pick-up form
Pick-up Request Form

http://www.univsvcs.northwestern.edu/computer_pickup/form.htm
Other Recycling Resources

• For non-University mobile devices:
  – Check with your service provider for recycling options

• For non-University computers and equipment:
  – Check with the computer manufacturer for recycling programs
  – Check with your county of residence for recycling options that might be available
Questions?
Visit the NUIT Web Site!

www.it.northwestern.edu
Contact Us

847-491-HELP (4357)

or

consultant@northwestern.edu
Upcoming Tech Talks

April 11: Spring Cleaning: Keep Your Computer in Great Shape

May 23: Stay Connected & Secure all Summer Long

Same locations, Noon – 1 p.m.