

Computer Bits by Mark Eggert of Raad One Network Solutions, Inc.

Welcome to Computer Bits, a series of articles of computer and network information. I have been seeing a rash of video card failures lately, so I think it's time to talk about routine computer maintenance.

Just as you do regular cleaning and routine maintenance of your offices and equipment, it is important to do some maintenance on your computers too. As with all machines, computers need regular maintenance to keep them in good running order and have them last longer. These maintenance items need to be done at regular intervals and the longer you go between them the more likely you are to have a problem, which could cause data loss and/or lost productive. There are three maintenance items and each has its own schedule.

The first is the most important as it deals with your data. You need to protect your business data by backing it up. Data should be backed up daily, weekly, or monthly depending on its importance. The BIOS (Basic Input Output System) also needs to be backed up. The BIOS should be backup at least once and then only when changes are made to it. Another thing to consider here is to archive old files off of the computer. Since most computers now come with at least a CD writer, consider making CDs of old unused files and remove them from the hard drive. This will help with the last item on drive maintenance.

The second item is cleaning the computer. Not only should the case, keyboard, monitor, and mouse be cleaned but the computer should be opened and the inside cleaned of dust and debris. You should also check that all cables are tightly connected. An important part here is to check and clean the various fans in the computer. If they remain dirty and fail to operate overheating can occur and damage the internal devices. Failed or clogged fans have been the culprit in all of the video card failures I've seen. This check should be performed every four to six months.

The last item is a drive check. The Boot Diskette, if applicable, needs to updated whenever hardware is added or removed. The hard drive needs to be checked by running ScanDisk and DeFrag. Defragmenting the hard drive helps it read and write at optimal speed and keeps the computer running at full speed. These should be done monthly or when major files are added/deleted from the system.

If you have a computer or network question you'd like answered and you think others would like to know the answer to, please forward them to me. My email address is meggert@wi.rr.com and my phone number is 262-679-7704.