

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

Welcome to Computer Bits, a series of articles on computers and network information. This month's question is: I am replacing some of my older computers and thinking about donating them, how do I make sure that my company information is removed from the hard drive?

A very good question indeed! There are probably a number of you who are either buying replacement computers or are just retiring older computers. And you're thinking about donating or giving the old computers away. You should know that just because you deleted a file, it's not gone ever if you emptied your Recycle Bin. Why is this? Well, it happens to be the way Microsoft operating systems have worked since DOS. What really happens when you delete a file is the directory entry is renamed so it's no longer visible and the pointer to where the file is located on the hard drive is removed. The file is still there! And it will be until it is overwritten. Even if you reformat your hard drive, the file remains. Now this is good if you've accidentally deleted an important file because there are software tools that can help you retrieve the file. This is also bad because anyone can use these tools to retrieve files from your hard drive. So how to you protect you files? You can use a data eraser program, these programs actually write over the deleted files a number of times with random data and they also remove the invisible file names from the directories. If you're interested in either file recovery or data eraser programs, please let me know.

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, my phone number is 262-679-7704 and my fax number is 262-679-7664.