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 article is a follow up to my August 2004 article on remote or online backups. I was asked to review the different backup options available.

The alternative to remote or online backup is local backup. Local backups can be done in a number of ways, there is backing up to floppy diskettes, backing up to tape drives, backing up to CD/DVD drives, backing up to a Zip/Jazz drive, and backing up to another hard drive. Which method is right for you depends on the amount of data you need to backup and the frequency of the backups.

Backing up to floppy diskettes is a rarely used method these days as they don't hold very much data. Currently, I backup my accounting data to floppy diskettes but that will soon come to an end as I almost fill a diskette with one backup.

Backing up to CD/DVD and Zip/Jazz drives is a good method for medium amount of data. These backups run quickly but they're limited to about 4GBs (on a DVD) and the currently backup software only allows you to backup a workstation. Although, I have heard of software that will allow you to use these drives on server being available next spring. I use a DVD writer to backup all of my data, it takes about 20 minutes to backup 2GBs of data and verify it.

Backing up to tape drives is the preferred method for backing up large amounts of data. It also allows you to archive this data in a safe place. All businesses I work with that have a server use this method. There is a practical limit of about 80GBs for using this method. This limit is due to the time it takes to backup and verify this much data. Usually businesses don't have a larger enough non-production window where that data can be backed up without being accessed or modified.

Backing up to another hard drive is a method for doing quicker backups. This method is usually combined with tape backup that can backup the second hard drive during production hours. The down side of this method if not combined with another method is that the data can't be easily archived to a safe location. This method shouldn't be confused with Drive Mirroring which also uses 2 matched hard drives. Drive Mirroring is a data redundancy used to servers to keep a server operating if a hard drive fails.

If you have a computer or network question you'd like answered and you think others would like to know the answer too, 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.