

know risk

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Looking after your laptops

In 2004, three men broke into a school and stole more than 40 Laptop computers from student's lockers. The total value exceeded \$120,000 but more distressingly to the students was the loss of their term's work.

Recently two men were travelling on a plane and had identical carry cases stored in their hand luggage.

Both inadvertently picked up each other's case and went home not realising their mistake. Fortunately the error was easily rectified but it could have been a lot worse.

Everyday laptops are left in taxis, stolen from cars and stolen from unattended church buildings. They're easy to steal, easier to sell and fetch a good price, the ideal target for a thief.

One laptop may be easy to replace but the cost of replacing many over time quickly mounts up and is sure to impact your insurance premiums.

Consider also the confidential information often held on the hard drive, e.g. church

member lists, contact details, personal information and financial details. Not only does this information need to be reconstructed, it may be used for malicious purposes.

The issues

The Australian 2004 Computer Crime Survey noted that:

- Laptop theft had doubled since the last survey in 2002
- The average cost of a laptop theft and the associated data recovery was \$17,670
- The total annual financial loss from stolen laptops in 2004 was \$1.5m.
- Ansvar Insurance has also noted a sizable increase in the number of claims involving stolen laptops. Some of the circumstances include:
 - Theft from cars where the laptop was left in full view of passers by.
 - Theft from unattended and unlocked offices.
 - Theft from employees' homes.
 - Laptops accidentally forgotten and left behind.
 - Laptops accidentally dropped, knocked or had liquids spilt over them.

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Preventing laptop theft & damage

- Treat a laptop in the same way you would treat cash. Would you leave \$2,000 on the front seat of your car while ducking into a shop? Or leave \$2,000 in your car overnight?
- Structure your church buildings so that visitors cannot remove your computers or valuable equipment unaccompanied.
- When laptops are left in an office overnight, lock them away in a secure room or cabinet, or have a lock and cable/noose/chain arrangement secured to the desk.
- Make sure your laptops are password protected at all times. Consult an I.T. professional about upgrading your security access.
- Don't store laptops in vacant unlocked rooms or offices.
- Record the make, model and serial number of all your computer equipment.
- Ensure that when your employees and members take laptops home, they understand the issues and take adequate security precautions.
- Educate your colleagues with respect to the vulnerability of laptops.
- While laptops are portable, consider the appropriateness of the working location e.g. working by the beach or by water may be courting disaster.

This material is for information purposes only. It is not intended to give specific legal or risk management advice nor are any suggestions, checklists or action plans intended to include or address all possible risk management exposures or solutions.

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