

3rd Sector COMmuniCaTions

From those friendly people at **DOT-COMmuniCaTions**
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3rd Sector COMmuniCaTions is a regular column offering IT advice & support specifically for not-for-profit organisations. If you have an IT-related problem that might also benefit others, please send an email to the address shown below, & we'll do our best to answer.

We've recently helped a couple of clients whose computer equipment had been damaged by flooding. While most of the computers were able to be recovered, it's vital that when disaster strikes the following actions are carried out as soon as possible.

While some liquids are a serious risk & can damage electronics (such as salt water, sugary soft drinks & tea or coffee), water on its own is relatively safe provided it does not come in contact with electricity.

If the machine is still running when discovered, don't worry about saving the data, power down the device immediately. You need to be careful if there is any water around & the computer is plugged into the mains, because you don't want to get a shock. If the device can run off a battery, remove that as well.

Handle carefully. There is no sense in trying to save the computer from water damage if you subsequently damage the equipment by dropping it or through rough treatment.

Try & remove any liquid from inside as soon as possible by pouring it out the same way it likely got in but be careful as you turn machines over. Keep liquids away from LCD screens & displays but if there is any water on the surface, dry immediately.

Dry the outside of the device. This ensures no more liquid gets inside when you start taking it apart. First rule of recovery, do nothing that could make the situation worse.

Disassemble the device or parts affected. Liquid can find its way into the smallest spaces, so you need to take apart as much as possible to ensure you dry off any hidden areas of moisture.

Clean any parts that have been flooded with mud, sewage or damaging liquids. If not removed, they may damage the device when it's started up. Obviously you shouldn't just stick the hard disk or motherboard under a running tap, but parts without a lot of electronic circuitry can be washed thoroughly in clean water & dried as quickly as possible.

Dry the inside of the device as thoroughly as possible. Start with the large areas & work your way into nooks & crannies. The goal is to dry the whole of the inside, even if it doesn't look wet. Use paper towels & cotton swabs, but ensure whatever you use doesn't fall apart & leave fragments inside. A hairdryer using high speed, low heat works best for getting liquid out. Do not use high heat near circuitry.

Hard disks need careful drying. Most are sealed units so as long as they are not left for too long in water the actual disks inside may well be OK. Never start the computer until the hard disk is fully dry. Carefully unscrew & gently dry the circuit board & ensure the foam underneath is fully dry before reassembling.

Even if you think the machine is completely dry, wait at least a further 24 hours with the equipment open in a warm, dry room or with a dehumidifier before reassembling.

Once you are sure everything is fully dry, put it back together with everything going back in reverse order to the way it was removed. Now test using a RCD (Residual Current Device) circuit breaker so it automatically trips in the event of a short circuit. Hopefully the machine will start as normal, but if not your prompt action makes it more likely that specialists may be able to recover something of value, even if its only parts that can be reused.

Disable Flash Drive Autoruns

Microsoft recently released a patch for Windows XP, 2000 and Server 2003 to disable Autorun on non-CD/DVD based media e.g. Flash Drives. This patch helps to prevent viruses that copy themselves to USB drives from spreading. It was already part of Windows Vista, 7 and Server 2008 but was only recently made available to older operating systems via Windows Update. It is recommended that all users apply the patch found at <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/967940> as soon as possible.

Do you need a Network Server?

It can be difficult to decide if and when you should consider buying and installing a proper network with a server. As a general rule if you have more than five computers in the same office you should consider whether or not you would benefit from a server-based network.

This article discusses some of the most popular reasons for acquiring a Server, potential drawbacks, costs involved in purchasing, installation and support, and prerequisites for getting one.

To read the full article: <http://tinyurl.com/yjfdpxa>

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For more information & a free consultation,
 please contact: **01422-845003** or email: **talk2us@dot-communications.co.uk**