

Ability's Data Doctor discussed damaged data files.

"First of all, how does data get damaged in the first place?"

Most of the time, data damage occurs when your data files are open and in use. Everything on your computer is subject to power surges/outages, network drops, freezing due to overtaxing your computer's memory and more. Viruses are also a major factor of damaged files. User input error can also damage files. For example, if you accidentally enter letters into a field that is expecting numbers, you might cause "invalid integer" errors. Although a high quality program will most likely not let you enter incorrect data, there are still those that may have uncorrected glitches.

"How Can I Prevent This?" Although there's no "perfect" cure to prevent data corruption, here are a few tips that you should consider:

- Exit your program when you are not using it. Many programs have built-in automatic logout features to ensure your system is closed after a specified period of inactivity (10-15 minutes).
- Be sure that ALL computers on your network are running the exact same version with "service packs" on any commonly run programs.
- Battery Backup - Critical to have, especially if you are in an area with fluctuating power outages. Many battery backups will automatically close out of programs safely, then shut down your computer, without anyone present. [APC](#) and [TrippLite](#) make very reliable and affordable backups, available at most Office Max, Office Depot, Staples, CompUSA and more.
- Daily Data Backups - If your program has a reminder option, turn it on and USE it on a DAILY basis. I'd suggest getting a USB memory stick that you can put on a keychain. That will ensure you don't leave it behind, should your office be subject to damage or burglary.
- Redundant (RAID) drives on your server - If you have a dedicated server, be sure it uses redundant drives. That way, if one hard drive fails, the secondary one will have a mirror image so you can continue to work until the bad drive is replaced.
- Anti-Virus - Get a dependable one for EVERY computer and be sure it's up to date.
- Deactivate rarely used programs from your startup files (MSCONFIG) - This will reduce the number of memory-hogging programs which may be causing your system to lock/freeze.
- Run an Adware/Spyware removal program to analyze your system from potentially harmful programs. Although such programs are not viruses, per-se, they are not invited guests. [Ad-Aware](#) is a free program that may save you tons of headaches.
- Remote (off-site) backup - WARNING - Be sure that you check out the company that you are entrusting to secure your data! Although the convenience is nice, you never know into whose hands you are entrusting your data. If you can connect to your office from your home, this may be a more secure option. Programs like CrossLoop Pro, PC Anywhere, LogMeIn, ProComm Plus and Microsoft's Remote Desktop are easy to install and affordable solutions.

"Too late...my data is already damaged. What can I do now?"

Ability Clinical Technologies has more than 3 decades of experience in database functionality, design and repair. Usually within 48 hours we can retrieve your data, analyze, repair and return it to you. Give us a call...we're here for you!

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