

# The Federal Lawyer In Cyberia

MICHAEL J. TONSING

## Laptop Security

**Y**ou are one errant look—or one unlocked car door—away from the greatest possible act that can compromise your laptop computer. It could be gone in the blink of an eye. While you may have focused admirably on encrypting Cyberian data transfers, you may not have adequately prepared for a statistically far more likely calamity: the physical theft of your computer. According to a Gartner Group study published in 2002, your laptop computer has a one in 10 chance of being lost or stolen this year; and, according to the FBI, 97 percent of stolen laptops are never recovered.

Backing up your laptop regularly is square one.

Then, if your computer is lost or stolen, you'll at least be able to go on with your work. But, what about protecting the confidential and privileged data on your missing computer? And what about recovering the computer itself? Those odds—just three chances in a hundred—don't sound good. Can you overcome them? Read on.



### Backing Up

If your laptop is gone, how do you go on without the data it contains? And, where are your programs? If you have used software that will create a mirror of your hard drive, you may be able to recover both files and programs rather quickly.

Symantec ([www.symantec.com](http://www.symantec.com)) makes software called Ghost that you'll be truly glad you bought only after you experience a disaster. At a cost of roughly \$700 for a single-user license, Ghost™ (now in a new 12.0 version) backs up everything on a hard drive or partition or allows you to choose only the specific files and folders you want to back up rather than saving an entire drive.

The software can be set to make incremental backups to your system as a way to maximize space and save time. In Ghost's latest iteration, no restart is required after a backup has been made. You should consider "Ghosting" your entire laptop computer—programs and all—to an external hard drive that can be stored somewhere other than your office. In the event of a disaster like the theft of your laptop (or, equally cataclysmic, the destruction of your computer or its hard drive), you can be up and running again almost immediately.

Ghost is the imaging product that currently enjoys the greatest market share, but you may want to look

at a couple of other equally reliable alternatives as well. True Image™, produced by Acronis ([www.acronis.com](http://www.acronis.com)), deserves a serious look. Like Ghost, True Image (now in a 9.1 version) allows you to back up an entire hard disk or just your key files and folders. The software allows you to restore a full system or just individual files and folders in minutes. If a theft occurs (or if you run over your trusty laptop in your car—accidental damage being the number one cause of computer losses, followed by theft), restoration can be performed to a new completely new system with different hardware. The cost of True Image is competitive with Symantec's Ghost. A nifty feature in True Image is its so-called Windows Agent, a component that allows you to manage all backup and restoration tasks on all Windows systems on your network remotely. Thus, if properly configured, you could back up your laptop from home while it is plugged in to your network at the office.

Retrospect™ by EMC Insignia is another alternative that is worthy of consideration. Retrospect 7.5 is available for \$129 in a single-user edition. EMC Insignia touts its product as the easiest to use. ([www.emcinsignia.com](http://www.emcinsignia.com))

One other option deserves consideration: a device called a "hard drive duplicator." Duplicators are stand-alone devices that are specifically designed to clone hard drives quickly and easily—and with total accuracy—and the devices are reliable, fast, easy to use, and convenient. Prices start at a little more than \$300 for a basic model and can extend all the way up to several thousand dollars for a device with greater capacity and more bells and whistles.

Once you've addressed the backup issue—either with software or with a duplicator—you're ready to address the issue of compromised data and the monetary loss that can result from theft of a laptop computer.

### Buckling Up

The first line of defense is a password for entry into your system. Microsoft Windows™ allows you to build a password into your system. But passwords sometimes can be guessed or defeated. Another solution—and one that is better—is a device that recognizes your fingerprint. You can pick up a Microsoft personal fingerprint scanner from Amazon ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)) for less than \$35. Sony makes a scanner that retails for just under \$100 and is available through Amazon. The Sony scanner is called a



“Puppy” and plugs into any laptop USB port. Both products come with software that ensures that only your distinctive fingerprint will allow access to your system. I don’t want to appear paranoid, but you might consider using *both* a password and a fingerprint scanner, because both will protect your laptop’s data as well as a PIN and an ATM card, which must be used together, protect access to your bank account.

Is there a chance that you can defy the sobering statistics cited above and actually recover a stolen computer? Yes, indeed there is. LoJack® for Laptops is a theft protection service that tracks, locates, and recovers stolen laptop and desktop computers. LoJack software, available from many sources for less than \$100 per license, must be installed on your laptop before it is pilfered. (Now’s the time, Cyberians!) If LoJack software has been installed on your computer before it is stolen and you’ve paid LoJack’s annual fee of \$49, the software will work behind the scenes to contact the LoJack Monitoring Center silently and securely the first time the miscreant who stole your computer attempts to use it to log on to the Internet. Your laptop will then silently and surreptitiously report its location to the folks at LoJack, who will then track your computer’s location and report it to local law enforcement agencies. It is—if you will pardon the expression—a “no lose” solution, because the LoJack folks promise that, if your stolen computer is not recovered within 30 days, they’ll at least refund the purchase price of their software. LoJack’s Web site ([www.lojackforlaptops.com](http://www.lojackforlaptops.com)) reports that their software results in an astonishing rate of 75 percent of hardware recovered!

If you don’t want to use LoJack’s approach, or you want to be sure that you can recover your investment if your laptop computer is stolen, try Safeware Insurance ([www.safeware.com/greenwich](http://www.safeware.com/greenwich)). The Safeware Web site allows you to get an instant quote on a two-year laptop insurance policy that protects against economic loss resulting from either theft or accidental damage.

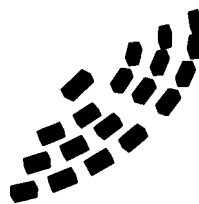
#### Conclusion

You can take solid steps right now to protect both your data and your investment in your laptop computer. A word to wise Cyberians is sufficient, I trust. TFL

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*Michael J. Tonsing practices law in San Francisco. He is a member of the FBA editorial board and serves on the Executive Committee of the Law Practice Management and Technology Section of the State Bar of California. He also mentors less experienced litigators by serving as a “second chair” to their trials. See [www.YourSecondChair.com](http://www.YourSecondChair.com). He can be reached at [mtonsing@lawyer.com](mailto:mtonsing@lawyer.com).*

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