

Re: W/XP PC HD Crashed

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- *From:* "John Wallace" <johnwallace4@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
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"David J Dachtera" <djesys@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
news:47489CFC.7BEB9F63@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Apologies for the OT post. I know a lot of folks here use WhineBloze; so, I'm hoping some one has some suggestions.

Came down here on Wednesday evening to find my WhineBloze PC complaining that the hard drive seems to have disappeared.

Skipping the details for now, I'm looking for suggestions on disk data recovery. I'm most interested in recovering my LookOut! file (.PSTs, and such).

David J Dachtera
DJE Systems

Good luck. All is by no means lost yet, but more detail will be helpful.

0) How much is the data worth?

It seems the data wasn't backed up. Does this indicate the data is largely worthless? If so, you won't be interested in a low hassle, high cost solution such as a commercial data recovery outfit, correct? Sometimes these folks can do remote data recovery so you don't even need to take (or post) anything to them. If your data is largely worthless, working on the original can simplify the recovery process somewhat but is obviously higher risk. Otherwise you will need a block for block copy to work on, which can be done using something like the unix/Linux dd utility (now would be a good time to learn some Linux, if you didn't already).

1) What are the symptoms?

1a) What error messages are reported?

1b) Is the disk visible from the BIOS, and does the config look sensible? If it's not, you may wish to try it from another PC.

1c) What partitions/filesystems were you expecting on the disk? Next steps may depend on that. Eg if no NTFS, a W98 boot disk *might* be an interesting next step. Let's assume there is NTFS, so a W98 boot disk isn't really

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helpful.

1d) Can you get hold of something like a GHOST boot floppy/CD and use GDISK to see if the partitions and filesystems are as you would expect?

What happens next depends on whether the partitions and filesystems are as you would expect. If they are, you're most of the way there. Get something bootable that will read the filesystem and allow you to save all the readable bits somewhere else. If the bits you know you need are all readable, the job is mostly done (apart from replacing the old system). A Linux "Live CD" may be readily available, if not, now would be a good time to get one. Boot it, and if the files you need are readable, store them somewhere safe (a USB stick, a SAMBA share, etc – probably not relevant to you, but maplin.co.uk are currently selling LAN-ready disk enclosures for GBP30, part number a61fy, just add your own IDE drive and off you go)

If the partitions and filesystems are not as you would expect, life is more complicated, especially if you want a DIY solution. I have found Active@ Partition Recovery (DOS version, US\$30) to be helpful. Other prettier-looking ones are available, some from vendors with bigger names. Some of the big names have failed me where the folks at www.partition-recovery.com have succeeded. Your choice. I'm not going into more detail here as we don't know if it would be relevant to your circumstances.

Assuming you can find your PST files and whatnot, what were you planning to do next? Build a new system, take a backup, import the saved data, take another backup, and continue from there would be one option.

Or maybe you could just connect the broken drive to a VMS box and write a TECO macro or two to get the required data out...

Good luck
John Wallace