

## Use a Non-descript Carrying Case

Nothing says "Steal me" like walking around a public place with a leather laptop case with the manufacturer's or your company's logo stamped to the side. Consider buying a form fitting padded sleeve for your laptop, and carrying it in a backpack, courier bag, briefcase, or other common non-descript carrying case. For men, backpacks make it easier to keep you laptop with you when you go to the bathroom. Consider putting small locks on the zippers of your case (especially backpacks) so no one can simply reach into your bag and rip you off as you are standing in line.

## Make Security a Habit

People are the weakest link in the security chain. If you care about your laptop and your data, a healthy dose of paranoia will help keep it safe. Get into the habit of locking your laptop up when you're working with it, or when storing it. (A cable lock takes less time to install then it does for your PC to boot.) Use common sense and try to stay in physical contact with your laptop at all times. If you are with trusted friends or business associates use the "buddy system" to watch each others back (and laptops). A determined thief may still be able to get your laptop if they set their mind to it, but why make it easy for them?

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# L A P T O P SECURITY



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# Basic Security

## Choose a Secure Operating System and Lock it Down

If you care about your data, pick an operating system that is secure. Windows 2000, XP, and Vista offer secure logon, file level security, and the ability to encrypt data. If you are running Windows 95/98/Me, anyone who picks up your laptop can access your data.

## Asset Tag or Engrave the Laptop

Permanently marking (or engraving) the outer case of the laptop with your name address, and phone number may greatly increase your odds of getting it returned to you if you happen to carelessly leave it somewhere. There are also a number of metal tamper resistant commercial asset tags available that could help the police return your hardware if it is recovered. According to the FBI, 97% of unmarked computers are never recovered. Clearly marking your laptops deters casual thieves and may prevent it from simply being resold over the internet via an online auction.

## Register the Laptop with the Manufacturer

We've become so used to throwing away the registration cards for all of the elec-

tronic items we buy every day, because we've learned that it just leads to more junk mail. Registering your laptop with the manufacturer will "flag" it if a thief ever sends it in for maintenance, and increases your odds of getting it back. It also pays to write down your laptop's serial number and store it in a safe place. In the event your laptop is stolen, it will be impossible for the police to ever recover it if they can't trace it back to you.

# Physical Security

## Get a Cable Lock and Use it

Over 80% of the laptops on the market are equipped with a Universal Security Slot (USS) that allows them to be attached to a cable lock or laptop alarm. While this may not stop determined thieves with bolt cutters, it will effectively deter casual thieves who may take advantage of you while your leaving a table to go the bathroom, etc., Most of these devices are between \$30 - \$50 and can be found at office supply stores, online and in the ECU Computer Store. In addition to the quality of the cable, consider the quality of the lock. And remember: They only work if you use them properly. Tether them to a strong immovable and unbreakable object.

## Consider other Security Devices

Since laptop theft has become such a big issue, the market has been flooded with a variety of security gadgets and gizmos. Motion detectors and alarms are popular items, as are hard drive locks. Biometric identification systems are also being installed on some laptop models which allows your fingerprint to be your logon ID instead of a password.

## Use Tracking Software to have your Laptop "call home"

There are a number of vendors that offer stealthy software solutions that enable your laptop to check in to a tracking center periodically using a traceable signal. In the event your laptop is lost or stolen, these agencies work with the police, phone company, and internet service providers to track and recover your laptop. CompuTrace, SecureIT, Stealth Signal, and ZTrace provide tracking services for corporations and individuals.

# Preventing Theft

## No Place is Safe

Never assume your laptop will be safe just sitting around. Treat as if it were \$1,000 in cash lying around, and lock it down using a cable lock. Never assume that your laptop is safe.