New Year's Resolution: Back up your data!

Believe it or not, our technical support group receives about a call a week from a user who needs to restore their database, but they either do not have a recent backup of their data or they have no backup at all!

Since we're in the business of helping people, nothing distresses us more than to hear the pain and anguish in a caller's voice when we tell them that without a good backup there's nothing we can do to restore their data to where it was immediately preceding the "event."

The following is a partial list of "events" that could result in the need to restore a database:

- A computer virus innocently launched from an infected e-mail.

- An irrecoverable hard drive crash.

- A user who accidentally and incorrectly used the Mass Modify feature. (Just last week we had a user who mass modified all the last names in their database to the same name.)

- A user who accidentally used the Mass Delete feature and removed multiple records.

- A poorly executed data import.

- A failed Database Rebuild.

- Data corruption resulting from a power outage or from turning a computer off without logging out of the Client Data System.

- Computer loss (theft).

As you can see, there are many, many things that can happen to your database. A properly implemented backup procedure can and will protect you from complete data loss when (not if) you encounter one of the above events.

The rule of thumb used for backing up data is: ***Back up whatever you don't want to re-enter manually***.

You may need to confer with your computer consultant to determine which backup routine and products are right for your office. The following information contains guidelines for backing up your Client Data System (CDS) program and in no way is a complete breakdown of all aspects of backing up your computer system.

Frequency of Backups

We recommend backing up your data daily. Use a different tape for each day of the week that you back up (e.g., Monday – Friday). You should keep the Friday backup tapes for at least a month or two in case you discover data corruption, but don't know when the corruption started. This will enable you to restore data in 1-day increments (the Monday through Friday tapes) or in

weekly increments (the archived Friday backup tapes). Keep in mind that you should store some backup tapes in an off-site location in the event of a fire or other disaster at your office.
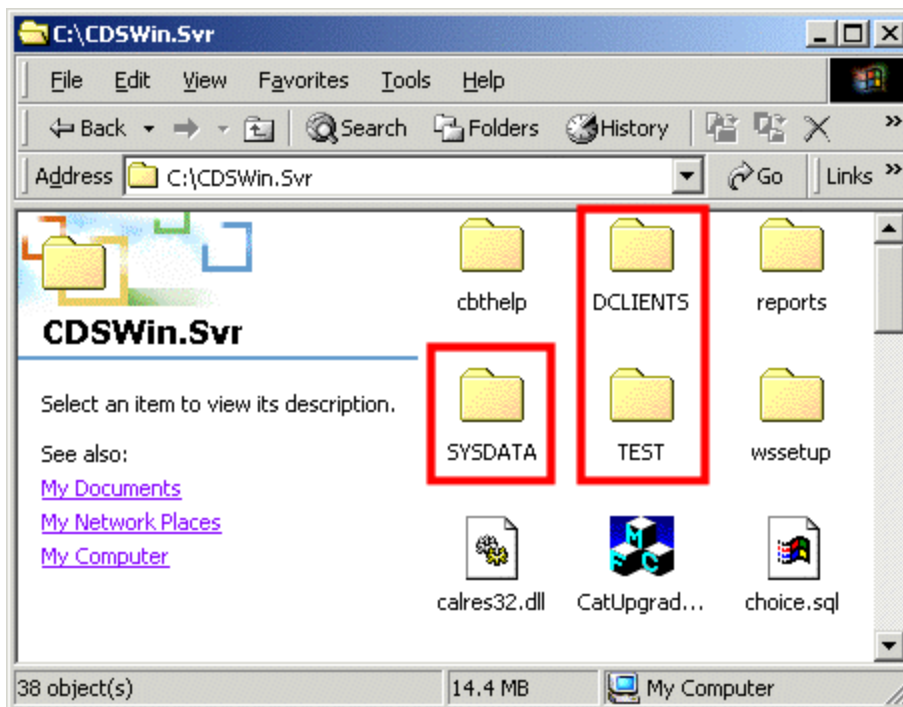
Backup Media

There are several types of media that can be used for back up purposes. Recordable CDs (CD-R) typically store 650 MB to 800 MB, Zip disks store up to 250 MB, and Jaz disks store up to 2 GB (2000 MB) of data. The backup media you utilize will depend upon the amount of space required for the information you are backing up. Please check with your technical staff member or your computer consultant to determine the backup method best suited for your needs.

Backing up CDS

Once you've determined the backup procedure and media, you are ready to begin backing up your valuable data. In this section, we will identify only the CDS program and database files that need to be backed up. Ideally, however, you should back up your entire system.

If you simply want to back up your CDS database and system files, back up the entire CDSWIN (stand-alone) or CDSWIN.SVR (network) folder. If you have more than one database, you will have to make sure that those database folders are included in the backups as well.

Below is a screenshot of the folders you should back up. In this example, there are two databases (DCLIENTS and TEST) along with the SYSDATA folder.

CDS Backup Steps

Keep in mind that depending on the amount of data to be backed up, the backup process can take a fair amount of time. For this reason, most people back up their systems overnight when people are not in the office.

1. Make sure that the Sybase engine is shut down. If you have the Sybase engine configured as a service, you will need to stop the service. Otherwise, locate the SQL icon on the taskbar or in the System tray by the clock, right-click on the icon and then select Exit.
2. Whether you have a tape, CD-R, Zip, or Jaz back-up system, make sure that you have the appropriate folders in the CDSWIN or CDSWIN.SVR directory selected and move or copy them to the backup device(s).

In the next E-Z News: Performing routine maintenance on your Client Data System database.