

Tip of the Month

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APRIL 2015

How Lawyers Can Minimize Data Breach

Data breaches continue to place millions of Americans at risk of identity theft and fraud. You can minimize the risk to your firm by following these data breach protection tips.

Keep Only What You Need. Reduce the volume of information you collect and retain to only what is necessary. Minimize the places you store personal data. Know what you keep and where you keep it.

Safeguard Data. Lock physical records in a secure location. Restrict access to employees who need to retrieve private data. Conduct employee background checks and never give access to temporary employees or vendors.

Destroy Before Disposal. Cross-cut shred paper files before disposing of private information. Also destroy CDs, DVDs and other portable media. Deleting files or reformatting hard drives does not erase data. Instead, use software designed to permanently wipe the drive, or physically destroy it.

Train Employees. Establish a written policy about privacy and data security and communicate it to all employees. Educate them about what information is sensitive and their responsibilities to protect that data.

Use Password Protection. Password protect your business computers—including laptops and smartphones—and access to your network and accounts. Require employees to have a unique user name and a strong password that is changed at least quarterly.

Keep Security Software Up to Date. Install updates to security, web browser, operating system and anti-virus software as soon as they become available. They contain “patches” that address security vulnerabilities within the software and are your first line of defense against online threats. Use firewalls, anti-virus and spyware software; update virus and spyware definitions daily.

Encrypt Data Transmission. Encryption helps protect the security and privacy of files as they are transmitted or while on the computer. Avoid using Wi-Fi networks; they may permit interception of data.