

WHITE PAPER

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Keeping Printed Data Secure

Helen Borland, Sales Director of Easycopiers explores why data security has never been more important and how to ensure your office printing and copying equipment doesn't breach data protection law.

One of the most valuable assets in your business is its data. Not just customer information but all of the back-office information, processes, procedures and employee records needed to run your operations. This treasure trove of data is being constantly accessed, edited and printed throughout your organisation by all departments.

Many companies quite rightly spend a lot of time on securing this data across their network. Servers in secure rooms, firewalls, encryption, limited access for employees and of course passwords on the front end of PCs, laptops and phones. There is however an often overlooked security hole and it's sitting in the corner of your office.

For many years now, office printers and photocopiers have been connected to your network. And of course, your IT department has done its due diligence and ensured only authorised devices on your network can make a secure connection to it. However, the printer/copier has also for many years come equipped with memory and a hard drive.

It's this combination of storage that can make your printer/copier a security risk. And that risk result in large fines and even jail for senior management in your organisation. In 2010, Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust was fined £325,000 by the ICO after thousands of patient's medical records turned up

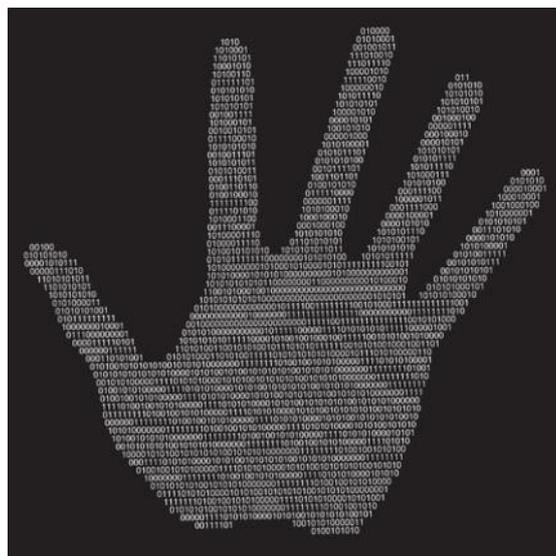
on 232 hard drives that hadn't been destroyed but had been sold on eBay. And back in 2006, Nationwide Building Society was hit with a £980,000 fine – still the largest sum ever imposed for data loss in the UK – for losing 11 million saver's personal data through the theft of an unencrypted laptop.

So how secure is your printer/copier hard drive? How do you stop rogue (or just plain nosey) employees from re-printing sensitive documents? And do you know how

your office equipment dealer will handle returned kit at the end of a contract?

Perhaps it's time to re-examine these issues. After all, despite all the emails we receive, most sensitive data is still printed and stored on paper at some point in its life. And in the same way you don't let all your employees go through your HR files, you wouldn't want them being able to retrieve prior prints from the printer/copier or walk off with a mission critical document that's been left in print tray.

The overwhelming majority of employees are honest but you must have mitigation plans in place to protect you against fraud, corporate espionage, intellectual property or identity theft – all of which can take place over your network from external attackers as well as in the office.



A leased copier can be a leased danger

Most digital copiers are sold on a fixed lease contract. At the end of the contract they're returned to your reseller, who often refurbish the machines and lease them to someone else – or they're sold on to the trade which means they could end up anywhere in the world and not subject to data protection laws. If you buy your copier outright, you will likely sell it on when the end of its useful life is reached. This transfer-of-technology includes the hard drive in the machine and that is where the risk comes in.

How can you secure your data?

There are several key strategies you can employ to secure your data. The most basic is to have procedures for the start and end life of any copier you acquire. Before you invest, ensure you are dealing with a trusted reseller. One, such as easycopiers, who understands data security and employs recognised techniques to securely wipe any machine's memory and hard drive. As a result, you'll receive a machine that's clean and ready to work with (meaning no liability for you holding someone else's sensitive data) and when you retire the machine, you can rest easy knowing your precious data remains just yours.

Of course, during the machine's life in your office you still need to enact day-to-day security. If your copier has a 'delete old jobs' function that wipes jobs from memory as it goes or at the end of the day, make sure it's set up correctly. Firewalls and an IT department that's careful with open ports on the network help too. If you're working with extremely sensitive data for instance in banking, legal or healthcare, you might plan in a monthly full-device wipe.

Don't forget the basics either. Setting up PIN numbers or security cards to limit access and turning off any 'repeat job' function is sensible. If your Director of HR or Managing Director like paper copies of documents, then having them queued until a PIN number is physically entered on the device stops forgotten prints sitting in the out tray and being taken either accidentally or maliciously by someone else.

Deal with a trusted reseller. One who understands data security and employs recognised techniques.

Enlist some (standard) help

While you are responsible for the security of your own data, you can easily get some help. Combined with good network and access management practices, you can get to a level of security that even government departments would be proud of.

ISO 15408 certification, also called 'Common Criteria ("CC")' is an international standard for the evaluation of IT security. You can use this certification, conforming to the IEEE 2600.1 security standard so that the security functions from different manufacturers can be compared and examined.

A number of multifunction copier vendors conform to this standard. We suggest that you actively use it to protect yourself from the risks outlined here. Leading resellers, including easycopiers, know all about the certification standards and are keen to assist you in securing your output devices.

Established in 1998, easycopiers are an independent supplier of electronic office equipment and can help you source the best equipment for your specific scenario. We can create bespoke packages – and consult on data security.

We are top tier partners with leading brands such as Canon, Ricoh, Develop and Lexmark and offer a full gamut of office solutions from copiers and printers to document workflow, print management, video conferencing, telecoms and more.

For more information on easycopiers, please visit our website at www.easycopiers.net and keep up-to-date with more industry news on Twitter @easycopiers