

Survey: Most organizations don't delete data securely

By Caron Carlson

17 November 2010

*FierceCIO*

Most organizations leave themselves open to data breaches because even if they engage in systematic data wiping of computers, they aren't deleting data securely, according to a survey by Kroll Ontrack, which provides a range of information management offerings, including data wiping software.

The survey included 1500 respondents from 12 countries. Less than half of them (49 percent) deploy a data eraser method systematically, and three-fourths fail to delete data in a secure way. Rather than using data eraser software, they delete or reformat files, or they destroy drives, Kroll found.

"Deleting files from a hard drive only marks the files to be rewritten, which may never occur. Furthermore, reformatting the drive only removes the entries in the index or table of contents that point to the data. And, physically destroying a drive is not a guaranteed method of protection," said Jim Reinert, Kroll's vice president of product development.

The right way to erase data, according to Kroll, is with certified data wiping software (which Kroll just happens to sell) or a degausser. Wiping software overwrites data on the hard drive, and a degausser uses a magnetic force to erase the data. A mere 19 percent of those surveyed use a data eraser software, and 6 percent use a degausser.

Forty percent of businesses handed over a used hard drive to someone else, and 22 percent don't know what became of old computers, the survey found.