

Critical File Backups for Win95, Part 1

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Ahhh, Windows 95. Ya can't live with it and ya can't live without it. Its a frustrating beast, and yet, beautiful at the same time. Some parts work wonderfully, like double clicking on the icon of a document you are working on and having it automatically load along with the word processor needed to modify it. And, some parts are terribly disconcerting, as when you get a message something like "Failure loading xxx.VXD, you must reinstall Windows" just when you were getting ready to do an important project. What to do? What to do? The answer, of course, lies with backups.

A complete tape restore or parallel port hard drive restore of your entire Windows 95 partition would provide a relatively painless way to get back where you started before the disaster struck. However, full backups take time and most of us do them only occasionally. Furthermore, Murphy's Law clearly states that a disaster will never occur immediately after completing a full backup. The Law goes on to state that calamity will always strike several weeks or months after the backup, insuring that you loose significant numbers of irreplaceable files. Well then, what to do? What to do?

Sometimes, you can fix the problem yourself, using some nice safety features built into Win95. For example, even when Win95 will not start at all, it may allow you to boot into its "Safe Mode" to make adjustments. Want to see your options? For a complete list of them type WIN /? at a DOS prompt, provided you took my past advise in #39 (Feb 97, HOW TO OPEN AND SHUT THE WINDOWS IN 95) to have your machine boot into DOS rather than directly into Win95. Indeed, I saved myself the other night when Win95 failed to boot after installing a defective video driver for my Super VGA adapter card. That dreaded message telling me to reinstall Windows was the only response that Win95 would give me. However, I was able to boot Win95 in Safe Mode using the WIN /D:M command from the DOS command line. It was then short work to uninstall the defective driver and reinstall my old one. After that, everything worked perfectly - quite a relief! Later, I downloaded a non-defective driver from the manufacturer via the web, and it is happily working to give me a beautiful display even as I type these words.

This kind of scenario makes one a little paranoid. Indeed, I have talked to people who hesitate to experiment with even the simplest, most minor customization of the setup of their Win95 because they fear they will "damage" something and suffer dire consequences. On the other side, those who do customize the setup risk an occasional disaster. Not good. We should be able to "tweak" our machines constantly, so that they become tailored to our needs, and change with us as our needs change. And we should be to do this with no fear of retribution. Ideally, if you did something dangerous during your customization, Windows should supply you with a cautionary message such as "You can't do that because if you do, I won't be able to start properly".

I'm one of those slightly paranoid people. While I do not hesitate to experiment and customize, I do want the security of a "back door" so that I can safely reverse any step I take that screws things up. To ease my insecurity, I have devised three batch files that I run at least once each week, and I always run them just before I begin to tweak my setup. Together, it takes only about a minute to run all three (actually they could easily be combined into a single batch file, but I sort of like the separation). The first backs up the all-important Win95 Registry. The second backs up

other critical Win95 files, and the third makes copies of critical DOS files. I'll show you the first this month, and the other two will follow. Here is MYREGBAK.BAT:

```
1      @echo off
2      rem    MYREGBAK.BAT (Put the date you created this batch file in here)
3      echo   Creating REGBAK.REG ... this will take a little time ...
4      regedit /e regbak.reg
5      echo   The file REGBAK.REG has been created; it is now being moved.
6      copy regbak.reg e:\backups
7      copy myregbak.bat e:\backups
8      echo   REGBAK.REG and this batch file have been copied to E:\BACKUPS.
9      echo   All finished backing up the registry with MYREGBAK!
```

I have added line numbers just for reference; don't type them in when you create the file. 1. The @echo off keeps the screen clean - nothing is sent to the screen from then on (including the echo off command itself) unless it is preceded by the command: echo. 2. Lines beginning with rem are just comments in the file, little reminders to yourself when reading the batch file. 3. This line is printed to the screen when the batch file is run. 4. This command tells the Registration Editor to make a copy of the current Registration file and to name the copy REGBAK.REG. 5. This line is printed to the screen when the batch file is run. 6. This copies the newly created file REGBAK.REG to the E: drive in the BACKUPS subdirectory. In your case, you may wish to move it somewhere else. For example, if you want to move the file to the C: directory in a subdirectory named SAFETY, then change this line to read: move regbak.reg c:\safety. Just be sure you create the subdirectory in C: before you run the batch file the first time. 7. This line copies the batch file itself to the E: drive in the BACKUPS subdirectory. Again, if you use a different drive and subdirectory, be sure to substitute them here. 8. and 9. These just post a reminder on the screen of what has been done.

Now you have a complete copy of the current registry, which you can explore at will with a text editor. Be sure not to modify it, however. In the event the current registry becomes corrupt or changed in a way that causes Win95 to stop working, you can always copy this backup in place of the corrupt version.

Put the batch file in the root directory of your Win95 hard drive. To run it, simply type MYREGBAK at the DOS command prompt. The file is safe to run, since it does not modify the current Registry, but rather, makes a backup copy of it. Next month, we'll explore the other two batch files. Happy computing!