Laptop Safety Basics

1. **You are responsible for backup.**
   Assume that only you can back up the data on your laptop. Back up as often as necessary. Sometimes that may be every day. Other times it may be once a month.

2. **Don't save your passwords on your laptop.**
   The easiest way to breach security is to "borrow" the laptop of any employee. Anyone who has access to the computer, even for a few minutes, has access to the network.

   Often employees tape passwords somewhere on the computer. Many times that's not necessary. It's amazing how many programs have logons that allow users to save their passwords. Don't count on being able to keep the laptop out of the wrong hands. Just remember your passwords.

3. **Be careful when placing your laptop on the airport security conveyor belt.**
   Next time you're in an airport look at the other passengers. It's very easy to identify those with laptops. It's also very easy to steal them.

   The favored method is to take a laptop right off the security conveyor belt and walk away. The scam works like this. Two people spot you with a laptop carrying case. They manage to get in line for the metal detector directly in front of you. The first thief walks through security check with no problem. The second has a great deal of trouble. He or she is asked to empty pockets and check for jewelry several times. If you are like most people your luggage is already on the conveyor belt. While the second individual holds you up the first is walking away with your laptop.

4. **Tape your business cards to all the laptop accessories.**
   It's not uncommon for someone to accidentally grab equipment that belongs to a coworker—especially when the laptops and accessories look exactly alike. Often, when that happens, the missing equipment isn't discovered for weeks. Taping your business card on top of all your laptop accessories will prevent such mix-ups.

5. **Never take the laptop anywhere without the carrying case.**
   The carrying case is not just a convenient way of travel its protection. Laptops are a lot sturdier than they used to be, but it's still pretty easy to crack the case or screen. Replacement screens can cost almost as much as the laptop itself and can often take weeks to requisition. You can't afford to be out of business for that long. Take precautions.

6. **Make sure you plug your modem into an analog phone jack.**
   Most people have heard that modems and fax machines require analog lines and cannot work on digital lines. That's only part of the truth. Digital lines carry more electricity than analog lines and may actually irreparably damage your modem.
It's usually not an issue in residences but when visiting a business, always ask for an analog line. Most office phones have features, such as displays for date and time, that require more electricity than the majority of modems can handle.

7. Never put personal data or programs that can't be easily recovered on the laptop. Most companies have a policy against storing personal data or programs on company computers. Your laptop may, someday, unexpectedly require service. The computer support staff can't really take the time to safeguard your personal files. If your laptop is the only place you're storing last year's tax records or your child's homework, you may be in trouble.

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