

New Laptop Data Protection Comes in a USB Flash Card

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An analyst says that the low price point and ease of use could compel consumers, small and midsize businesses, and remote offices to buy a new package that includes IBM security software.

Rover Technology Fusions, a small data security provider, based in Tampa, Fla., introduced on May 7 a new data backup product for laptops and notebooks that uses solid-state Flash memory and IBM's Tivoli Continuous Data Protection for Files software.

Rover SPARC (Secure Personal Automatic Replication Card) is a USB Flash card about the size of a credit card that offers an automatic backup for electronic files - including office documents, financials and e-mails. The 2GB-capacity card aims to deliver continuous real-time protection of files and minimize backup and recovery times for individuals and mobile work forces, IBM's Chris Stakutis, creator of CDP for Files, told eWEEK.

When the card is inserted into the user's computer, IBM Tivoli CDP for Files self-installs quietly in the background and pre-configures itself to send copies of the user's most valuable data to the card. Once installed, the software automatically backs up files to a secondary location on the internal hard drive and then to the external USB Flash card, Stakutis said.

If a file is lost, corrupted or accidentally deleted, it can be recovered from one of two locations. If an individual forgets to attach Rover

SPARC, all changes are automatically stored and then submitted next time the card is plugged into the computer.

"Typically files are backed up at regularly scheduled intervals, and the degree of difference between the recoverable data and the latest version of a file can be significant," said Rover Technology Fusions general manager Simon Morgan.

"Rover SPARC stores multiple versions of files in real time, effortlessly and transparently, eliminating the backup window, and allowing for a choice of recovery points."

Two-thirds of corporate data resides on portable computers

Various IT researchers report that about 60 to 70 percent of corporate data resides on mobile workstations and laptops that are not typically part of routine enterprise-wide backup solutions. For businesses, the loss of data and file corruption can result in major financial and legal repercussions, not to mention loss in employee productivity.

A 2006 Forrester Research study found that 31 percent of all computer users have lost all their files due to events beyond their control, the spokesperson said. A key issue for many businesses has been finding all-in-one backup software that incorporates both portable hardware and reliable data backup software.

"I've been using the product since before it was officially released when I was at IBM," Dave Russell, a storage analyst with Gartner, told eWEEK. "I have the latest revision on my laptop now, and the quality has improved a great deal. Initially there were conflicts with anti-virus and some GUI issues, but it seems pretty stable as of the last six or so

months."

Russell said that the product doesn't have a lot of competition in the marketplace at this time.

"Tragically, I think that this solution is competing against nothing ... most laptops, corporate or home owned, are not covered by any form of backup," Russell said. "There are similar software approaches from Atempo, with the LiveBackup Express product that they acquired when they bought Storactive, and Yosemite has something like this with their recent FileKeeper acquisition.

"Neither of those two offerings has anything near the install base of IBM's product."

Which comes first, business or consumers?

"I think that this really comes down to routes to market and how the message is articulated," Russell said. "Given the low price point and brain-dead ease of use, consumers could grab on to this rapidly; however, we're seeing a number of large enterprises worried about data protection. A few times a week I get calls from companies asking about backing up thousands of laptops - 3,000 to sometimes even 10,000."

Future releases of Rover SPARC will contain Rover Sync software that can restore contact lists from lost or stolen Windows mobile devices, a Rover spokesperson said.

Rover SPARC is available for purchase now, with pricing beginning at \$99.95 for a 2GB SPARC. After the first year, a minimal annual maintenance fee applies for the software license, upgrades, support and a lifetime warranty against any manufacturer defect. Larger capacity cards (4GB, 8GB) will be available later this year.

SPARC will be sold directly through the Rover Web site and other sales distribution channels, consumer-based portals and broadcast media.

Rover Technology Fusions, founded in 1998 as Rover Wireless, has 25 employees and is privately held.

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