

Getting files from a failed hard drive

September 18 2009, By Jim Rossman

A friend whose iMac's hard drive had apparently died called recently, wondering how she might access the files on the failed drive.

Because she was using a Mac, she had an option that PC users lack: Target Disk Mode.

You use a FireWire cable to connect the "target" Mac (the one with the bad drive) to a working Mac. Then power on the target Mac and hold down the "T" key as you hear the start-up chime. A large FireWire symbol will show up on the target Mac's screen, usually in less than 20 seconds, meaning you can let go of the "T" key. That FireWire symbol will appear in different spots every few seconds like a screen saver.

If everything is working correctly, the target Mac's hard drive should show up as a second drive on the working Mac. Once that happens, you can open the drive and copy the files.

I've had to do this plenty of times. The tricky part is when the target Mac's [hard drive](#) is too far gone.

I've seen Target Disk Mode appear to be working, but if you happen to be copying a file that's on a bad place on the drive, you might just lock everything up.

If that happens, the FireWire symbol on the target Mac's screen will stop moving around. Feel free to try again. Press and hold the target Mac's power key until the screen goes dark and boot into target mode again.

If copying the same file or folder locks up the Mac again, try some other files. Sometimes certain files might be a lost cause. Sometimes the entire target drive is a goner.

My friend didn't have the best outcome, but at least she knows what steps to follow next time.

I don't know of a similar mode on Windows PCs, though I have had friends pull a bad drive out of a PC and use a specialized USB adapter or external drive enclosure to mount the drive for copying.

(c) 2009, The Dallas Morning News.

Visit The Dallas Morning News on the World Wide Web at www.dallasnews.com

Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.

Citation: Getting files from a failed hard drive (2009, September 18) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-09-hard.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--