

## Data Security

Many people are worried about the security of their computer system. The idea of someone hacking into my computer system and stealing my personal information is hair raising. If you are like me, your computer contains sensitive information such as credit card numbers, date of birth, checking account numbers, and social security numbers just to name a few.

You can increase your security by using a strong password. Strong passwords cannot only prevent access to your computer but can also discourage would be hackers. Ideally a strong password would consist of a mixture of 8 numbers, upper and lower case letters and symbols. Passwords should never be real words. Thieves have dictionary programs that have the capability of trying 1.2 million combinations of letters per second. This type of attack is called a brute force attack and is the most common way for thieves to steal your information.

Now that you know what a strong password is, lets talk about the best way to put that password to good use. I recommend password protecting your computer system at log on. Only Windows 2000 and Windows XP have this capability, Windows 95, 98 and ME are NOT secure operating systems. Be sure to password protect all user accounts including the administrator account which can sometimes be hidden.

Next, be sure to never save your password on any secured sites. When the Internet Explorer box pops up asking you if it would be OK to recall your password for the next session, it can be very tempting to allow it to save it. I strongly urge you not to however because of two reasons. First, if a hacker does break your strong password at log on, he or she would then have instant access to any banking, investment, and personal information you have saved on the Internet simply by logging onto that site. This simply provides for a second layer of protection. Secondly, if you are not forced to enter these passwords every time you use that web site then it is very likely that you will forget the password. If your computer ever crashed you would then have to go through the trouble of getting a new password because the new Windows installation would not contain any of your saved information.

For that extra bit of security you might even consider purchasing one of the new thumb print scanners. Scanners can be purchased for about \$150 and can be configured to be used practically anywhere a normal password would be used.

Lastly, be sure to never share your password with anybody. If you have any questions about the security of your computer be sure to contact the best computer techs in Powell at the Computer Depot. Call 947-0749 and ask to speak with Thomas or Roger.