



Hard Disk Data Erasure

Your computers and servers store information both about your business and employees as well about your customers. You must protect and control this information to ensure that it does not fall into unauthorized hands. As long as the computing asset is in use this is normally managed through security and operation policies, to ensure that only authorized users have access.

How do you safely re-purpose or dispose of assets that have held such confidential information? Data from a hard disk can be recovered using software tools after file and directory deletion, drive partition removal and formatting; even if the computer or a hard disk seems inoperable. Common file shredding and erasing applications may leave significant amounts of information on a hard disk or other storage device.

NIST¹ has identified four methods for media sanitization, their use is dependent on the types and nature of information stored:

- Disposal – simple discarding, can be used if media does not contain any confidential information
- Clearing – overwriting ALL of the media to prevent recovery using standard software tools. Requires validation as methods may not work on defective or locked drives and in some other cases.
- Purging – secure deletion of media, protects the confidentiality of information against a laboratory attack.
- Destroying – physical destruction e.g burning, melting, pulverization (with today's hard drives pieces must be less than 1/8inch diameter)

HDrevive provides a range of services, in line with the NIST publication, to assist you with media sanitation. We can assist in determining the appropriate methods and provide support services in the following areas:

- Disposal – validate that confidential information is unlikely to be present on a device
- Clearing – perform overwriting of all data areas, and validate that a hard disk was cleared
- Purging – secure erasure of media with validation of success

The methods used by HDrevive will allow a hard disk to be reused either by the customer or may remain in computers that are to be donated or otherwise re-used; this supports Bay Area Green Business Program objectives. Other providers may use methods for purging that make drives inoperable, thereby adding to eWaste and increases our overall carbon footprint; some may not even satisfy sanitization requirements.

HDrevive may not be able to adequately sanitize some devices, for example due to device defects or because of the nature of the information stored. In such cases we will recommend alternate methods.

For additional information on sanitization of media and to discuss your specific needs, please contact us.

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¹ NIST - National Institute of Standards and Technology - Guidelines for Media Sanitization SP 800-88, Sept 2006