**Data security for physical local and external storage**

Data on local storage such as your computer’s hard drive (local), and on external storage devices such as external hard drives, USBs, and flash disks must also be protected and secured due to the risk of theft, seizure, or device confiscation. All information on local or external storage must be encrypted and have a copy or a backup that is stored in a remote but accessible location.

**Do**

It is recommended to encrypt your local computer hard drive (e.g., FileVault for Apple Computer, BitLocker for Windows or VeraCrypt if BitLocker is not available). Encrypting your hard drives in your local PC(s) can prevent unauthorized access to them, such as booting using live CDs or simply taking your computer hard drive and plugging it into a different computer. It is common for a computer to have one physical hard drive, split into two sections, often seen as drive C, and drive D. In most cases, users use drive D to store all their data. Encrypting this logical partition (e.g., drive D) can protect your files from unauthorized access or even if the system is compromised or infected.

It is recommended to enable encryption during backup (ONLY on Apple computers). Apple computer’s FileVault has a feature that automatically encrypts your backup during the process. Keep a copy of your external hard drive backup on the cloud – encrypted. Keeping copies of your data from local and external storage to the cloud allows you to have an OFFSITE copy of your files.

**Don’t**

It is not recommended to store any unencrypted sensitive information in your external storage. Since your external storage like hard drives and USBs, are small, it is easy to lose it, or to be stolen. Keeping sensitive documents in your external storage without any encryption can put you at risk of unauthorized access or data leaks.

It is not recommended to accept or use any external storage devices the provenance of which you do not know. Using unknown USB or external storage may put your device at risk of infection or malware attacks. These are some of the most efficient tactics of cyber-criminals to get a foothold on your device if BitLocker is not available). Hard drive password is a hardware-based password enabled in your computer firmware and it requires authentication before you can even boot your computer to Windows. However, the quality of implementation varies between manufacturers so VeraCrypt, BitLocker or FileVault use is still recommended, regardless of using this feature or not.

**TIPS!**

Encryption tips!

- **External storage:** 7-Zip or VeraCrypt
- **Local storage (Windows hard drives):** BitLocker
- **For Apple Computers:** FileVault

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