Do you back up your data?

Introduction

Backing up is the process of copying valuable files to a safe place and in a systematic way. There is only one way to ensure the safety of your data – rigorous adherence to a regular program of backing up of your data. It is a nuisance to backup but this is a much better alternative than the loss of your data.

Some projects get their fingers burned badly before they take backing up seriously. Years of hard work can be lost in different ways - here are some possibilities:

- A computer may be stolen.
- A computer disk may malfunction or crash with loss of all data on that disk.
- Files on a computer may be deleted by mistake.
- Files may be corrupted by a virus or hardware fault.
- You may make one or a series of complex editing errors.
- Data files may be corrupted through power failure.
- Data files may be progressively damaged by an undetected program fault.

Two important rules

- Copy your files to a different storage media. If you backup to the same storage media (e.g. your hard disk), all your eggs are in one basket.
- Do not continually backup to the same backup file, overwriting your last backup. If you do this, you may end up overwriting a good backup with bad data.

Archiving/Zip

It's almost always best to compress files using a file compression utility or Windows in-build option for this. Why?

- Compressed backups will use less storage space.
- Many separate files will be stored as one single backup zip.
- There is less change of data damage as the single zip file is copied from one storage media to another.

Creating backups - which files?

Minimally, you need to backup files that have been edited.

Assuming your database project (including RDE files and report templates) is stored within one parent folder e.g. c:\brahmsdata, the simplest option is to back-up the entire database folder. Make sure that the database folder does not include old zip files and also that any Temp sub-folders created during upgrading have been deleted before copying. NB It is useful from time

to time to remove any BAK and TBK files. These files tend to accumulate when you change RDE file structure.

If you want to back up only an RDE file, take care to copy **the DBF and FPT file together** (FPT files hold your memo field data). BAK and TBK files can be deleted. Back up edited report templates (FRX/FRT files) - although these may be backed up with your brahmsdata parent folder.

Backups and storage place rotation

In the ideal world, you should never overwrite a backup, but rather, keep a continuous record of your data as it changes right from the start in a growing series of archived backups. A continuous series of backups is your strongest defense against data loss. Should an unexplained, perhaps systematic error creep into your database, you may need to step back in time, backup by backup, until you find the beginning of the problem. In many cases, this may be unrealistic – media will be re-used and backups overwritten. However, try to rotate storage media in a sensible way and always keep at least some regular backups that are not overwritten.

Backup frequency

The frequency of backing up depends on the rate of data entry. If you are editing your main database every day, you may want to back up every day. RDE files should always be backed up after a data entry session.

Automated network backups

If you have institutional support to auto back up your networked drive on a regular basis, this is ideal. HOWEVER, if you have been told it is operating, best to check. And a great way to check is to try to retrieve a backup!