

14.3.8 Data Destruction Facts

Data and its various storage mediums are not meant to last forever. This creates a need to destroy the data and the medium it is stored on. The data type, terms of contract, laws, and regulations will all determine the appropriate destruction method.

This lesson covers the following topics:

- Secure data destruction
- Third-party solutions

Secure Data Destruction

One of the most important factors to consider when choosing a destruction method is serialization. This is when the destroyer provides a certificate list of serial numbers for all items destroyed. This may even be a condition of a signed contract. The following methods are common ways in which data is destroyed:

- Burning
 - Only recommended for paper and done commercially
- Pulping
 - Paper documents are turned into a liquid
- Pulverizing
 - Also known as shredding
- Degaussing
 - Changes the polarity of the particles inside a hard drive, rendering it unusable

Third-Party Solutions

The following are solutions beyond physical destruction of storage devices and data:

- Delete or reformat
 - Uses a physical connection to make data unreadable, but this also allows the medium to be reused.
- Overwrite
 - This process consists of overwriting all data with 1s and 0s. More passes are required for highly sensitive data.
- Wipe
 - Used when storage medium is reused within the same company. Not recommended for devices being discarded.