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Tax season isn't only a time to take care of client returns, but also a good time to do spring cleaning in your office and get rid of unwanted documents and files from your computers.

Cleaning computers of unwanted files can be a tricky endeavor as you may not be absolutely sure that file you deleted is really deleted. Taking your device to a professional to wipe the hard drive or by taking a few simple precautions can save

you from the worry of important files being lost or possible stolen during the

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with the government retention guidelines of saving your tax returns for seven years. So as far as the proverbial hard copy you can go ahead and delete that once the back-up has finished saving your documents to a separate device.

For example, companies like insurance companies are actually mandated that their files are backed up to a hard drive and a lot of times for disaster recovery purposes they have that drive stored with a company like ours at AZ Data Storage which provides media vault services. We actually store the physical hard copy in our vault and if there is ever a need or a disaster occurs the company knows the hard copy is protected off site.

Cloud services are also becoming exceedingly popular to back-up your files. This is a viable option to back-up your files before cleaning your devices because if you inadvertently wipe a document from your computer you will have it saved in the cloud.

Later, you can start the process of elimination and start deleting files you don't need and this will give you an opportunity to look and cull what you don't deem important.

The back-up is very important and to just do a wipe without some sort of backup is not prudent. It is always prudent to ensure you have a back-up done and then cull through the files to get rid of unwanted files.

Computer Wiping

Wiping a computer clean depends on the amount of sensitive information stored on the device. For example, if you are working on a computer that has a lot of intellectual, proprietary information that is very important and privileged then you will want to have it cleaned professionally because even when you delete something there is that opportunity that file is not completely deleted.

So, if it is something you want to wipe because you are discarding that computer, or

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So, depending on the practice, let's say you're with a company and it's a company computer then I would use more safeguards since we know that clean isn't really clean.

If you are in your office and you have safeguards, security precautions, then you will be fine but if that computer is going to be leaving the office or multiple people are handling the device then this is when precautionary methods need to take place.

Time Frame

I would recommend every six months will be a safe measure for the time frame in which you should think about cleaning out your files and performing back-ups of your documents.

Taking these measures bi-yearly you are cleaning out unwanted and unnecessary files, and you are safeguarding your clients. Taking these precautions with the information stored on your devices is necessary in protecting your clients from possible information leaks or data theft. A simple cleaning of the device, whether professionally or on your own, will help keep your computer safe and secure.

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