1291 E. Hillsdale Blvd, Suite 303, Foster City, CA 94404
www.ittotalcare.com | Main: 650-352-6400

How to Test Your Hardware Backup System Monthly: A Practical Guide for Bay Area SMBs

Having a hardware backup system is only the first step - regular testing is what ensures it's actually working when you need it most. From failed drives to software glitches, unnoticed issues can quietly compromise your business's ability to recover critical files.

This step-by-step guide gives Bay Area small businesses the tools and checklist they need to confirm their backup hardware is healthy, up-to-date, and fully functional—month after month.

1. Locate and Label All Backup Devices

- **Why It Matters:** Knowing exactly where your backup drives, NAS systems, and other devices are - and how they're labeled - ensures nothing is overlooked during testing.
- **What to Do:** Create a list of all backup devices used for local or offsite storage. Physically label each unit clearly (e.g., "Main NAS – Office Server," "External Backup Drive – Accounting"). Store your device map in both digital and printed formats.

2. Check Physical Health of Devices

- **Why It Matters:** Dust, heat, and accidental damage can degrade hardware over time, even if the system appears functional.
- **Action Steps:** Visually inspect all backup hardware for signs of damage, wear, or overheating. Listen for unusual noises from hard drives or fans. Ensure systems are stored in cool, dry, secure areas away from high-traffic zones.

3. Verify Backup Job Completion

- **Why It Matters:** Missed or partial backups can go unnoticed without regular audits.
- **Checklist:** Open your backup software dashboard. Confirm that backup jobs ran as scheduled and completed successfully. Investigate any errors, skipped files, or warning messages. Re-run the job manually if needed, then verify it completes cleanly.

For more information please contact,
Brendan Duebner | President | IT Total Care
Phone: (650) 425-3910 | Email: BrendanD@ITtotalCare.com

4. Perform a Test File Restore

- **Why It Matters:** The true test of a backup system isn't saving your data - it's recovering it.
- **Steps to Include:**
  - Select a random non-sensitive file from a recent backup.
  - Restore it to a separate folder or test device and open the file to confirm integrity.
  - Record the time it took, and any issues encountered.

5. Confirm Backup Frequency and Retention Settings

- **Why It Matters:** Misconfigured schedules and retention policies can lead to data gaps or storage overloads.
- **What to Do:**
  - Review your settings for how often backups run (daily, weekly, hourly).
  - Check how many versions or days' worth of data are stored.
  - Adjust based on business needs—high-volume teams in the SF Bay Area may need shorter intervals and longer retention.

6. Monitor Storage Space and Drive Health

- **Why It Matters:** Full drives or bad sectors can silently cause backup failures.
- **Action Steps:**
  - Check available storage on each drive or NAS.
  - Monitor SMART reports or use tools like CrystalDiskInfo or Synology Storage Manager.
  - Replace aging drives proactively, especially after 3–5 years of use.

For more information please contact,
Brendan Duebner | President | IT Total Care
Phone: (650) 425-3910 | Email: brendand@ittotalcare.com

7. Test Remote Access and Offsite Copies

- **Why It Matters:** If your team relies on offsite or remote backups, they must remain reachable in emergencies.
- **What to Do:**
  - Access your offsite or cloud backups from an external location (if applicable).
  - Confirm encryption keys, user permissions, and login credentials still work.
  - Document any password or access issues before they become urgent.

8. Train Staff on RAID Do's and Don'ts

- **Why It Matters:** A standardized process ensures consistency and accountability month-to-month.
- **Action Steps:**
  - Use a monthly checklist or spreadsheet to document results.
  - Log who conducted the backup test and any issues identified.
  - Update internal SOPs or training guides as needed.

Want Peace of Mind with Your Backups?

At **IT Total Care**, we help San Francisco Bay Area businesses design, maintain, and test backup systems they can count on. Whether you're using a basic external drive or a full NAS solution, we offer regular audits and hands-on support to make sure your data protection is more than just "set and forget."

For more information please contact,
Brendan Duebner | President | IT Total Care
Phone: (650) 425-3910 | Email: BrendanD@ITtotalCare.com