

LOSS CONTROL DATA GUIDE

Laptop Security on the Road

Protecting laptop computers from theft often involves common-sense measures. The most basic of these requires treating the laptop as though it were cash. Just as you would not leave a few thousand dollars in cash on the seat of your car or on the bed in a hotel room, you should not leave a laptop lying around. They need to be treated as the valuable items they are. More important than the worth of the laptop, however, may be the information stored on it.

Business travelers need to take extra precautions with laptops. Some suggestions for safeguarding them while traveling include:

- Thieves can identify laptops by their carrying cases. If practical, carry the laptop in a nondescript case, such as a briefcase, that does not readily identify it as a computer.
- When carrying a laptop in its bag, walk with your hand directly on the bag strap, with the bag slightly in front of you. This makes it difficult for “snatch-and-grab” attackers who attempt to slip the bag off your shoulder while racing by in the other direction.
- Do not ask a stranger to watch your laptop while you make a phone call, go to the restroom, throw something away, or get something to eat. Thieves are everywhere and can look very businesslike and trustworthy.
- Beware of common distraction scams in which someone jostles you, asks you for the time or change, or even “accidentally” spills something on you while an accomplice takes the laptop.
- Avoid leaving your laptop in an unattended vehicle. If you must leave it in the vehicle, lock it in the trunk; however, don’t wait until you get to your destination to lock it in the truck since someone may be watching.
- At public phones, place your laptop on the shelf under the phone and not on the floor. Or find a phone booth with a seat and hold your laptop on your lap.
- Place the laptop in front of you or on the counter while conducting transactions at a hotel, airline, or car rental desk – do not leave it on the floor.
- Never check laptops as luggage - if not stolen, they may be damaged by rough handling.
- Airport security checkpoints are now requiring that laptops be removed from their case and scanned separately. Try to keep the laptop in sight - do not place it on the conveyor belt for the X-ray scanner unless you can get through the metal detector portal immediately.
- Take your laptop with you when you go to lunch at meetings - avoid leaving it in the meeting room.
- If you are using your laptop for a presentation, do not leave it in the presentation room overnight or when you go to lunch.
- In your hotel room, use the hotel safe to protect your laptop. If a safe is not provided and you must leave it in your room, do not advertise its presence - put it, and the bag, in your luggage or in a drawer; otherwise, take it with you.