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## IP is especially vulnerable when a firm is relocating

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The moving process opens up a host of potential risks for security breaches, whether it's portable devices such as laptops being lost or stolen or cartons of confidential documents being misplaced or damaged in transit, or data remaining on recycled hard drives that ends up in the wrong hands.

Companies planning a corporate move have to take special care to plan for the security and integrity of their intellectual property and information assets -- everything from employee records to customer data to legal and health care files to scientific experiments -- during relocation.

Relocation experts say planning for data and intellectual property protection should begin as early as possible in the moving process to identify risks and allow enough time for proper contingency planning.

Once the planning is under way, there are several steps companies can take to help secure their information assets, says Christine Mosholder, a partner with **Corporate Project Partners**, a real estate project management and relocation planning firm. First, it's critical to conduct an inventory of hardware as well as electronic and paper documents. Mosholder advises clients to consolidate all key data on the corporate network.

"You need to have all critical files backed up on the network," she says. "What's on the network is watched every step of the way."

Portable electronics devices, including laptops, removable storage drives and personal digital assistants are easy to lose track of during a move. To reduce risk there, Boston-based relocation services company Fox RPM Corp. recommends that employees take their laptops home during the move to prevent theft or loss, says Peter Stein, director of marketing and client relations for the firm.

Many companies use relocation as an opportunity to put new data security practices in place, says John Martin, president of The Cavan Group, an information technology-consulting firm in Boston who frequently works on corporate relocations.

"When you are going through a move, everything is up for grabs," he says. "It's much easier to introduce new policies, procedures and new security systems because employees are already making changes."

More companies are cracking down on the off-site use of laptop computers, barring employees from using them in public places like airports and restaurants, Martin says.

When companies are moving servers, they often have a member of their information technology staff ride with the mover, to ensure that nothing has been tampered with, says Gretchen Fox, president of Fox RPM.

It's not unusual to have one car leading the moving truck and another following it, relocation professionals say. When the crates of files or computer equipment arrive at the new location, an inspection and inventory is usually conducted immediately to make sure everything is accounted for.

Mosholder says communicating and educating employees and contractors about the move and related security procedures is critical. Workers need to know the correct policies for disposing of files, both paper and electronic.

Often, companies that provide electronics recycling services will come in and get rid of excess technology equipment that is not being taken in the move. Mick Schum, president of We Recycle, a Wallingford, Connecticut firm that has provided electronics recycling and disposal services to a number of Boston-area companies, says a surprising amount of equipment with sensitive data is often left behind.

"You'll often see old versions of PDAs and they contain enormous amounts of data," he says. Schum's company can destruct or recycle hard drives. To prevent the data stored on the drives from being circulated or released, the company follows industry-accepted security practices, such as requiring background checks for all employees and videotaping the hard-drive destruction.

Sometimes it's not just information stored on disks or on paper that are at risk in a corporate move. When a biotechnology or pharmaceutical company is relocating, live experiments often have to be moved and that can be particularly tricky. Often, the equipment is custom-designed for the particular experiments.

"You have to take all kinds of precautions and make special arrangements when moving," Mosholder says. What's more, the experiments often have to be kept at certain temperatures and can only be moved at limited times.

"If the integrity of some particular experiment is compromised, the company could be taking three steps backwards," Mosholder says.