

Physical Theft: An Overlooked Cause of Data Breaches

[Sadoff E-Recycling & Data Destruction](#)



Data breaches are a real concern for businesses of any size. However, when most people think of a data breach, they think of someone in a dark room hacking into your mainframe. That is rarely a reality for most businesses, mostly because it's hard and time-consuming. A phishing scam is more likely to cause a breach, but what about physical theft? This overlooked cause of data breaches happens every day, and if you are not careful, you could be next. Let's take a look at what physical data theft entails, who can fall prey to it, and what you can do to help prevent it.

What is Physical Data Theft?

When we say physical data theft, we are not talking about someone stealing notebooks and papers. The data is still digital, but instead of stealing it in the digital space through the internet, the thief gets their hands on the actual device that stores the data. This could be a cell phone, a thumb drive, a hard drive, or even a server rack.

What Will Data Thieves Do with Your Data?

There is a lot that can be done with your data depending on what type of information is housed there. If it's client data, they can use the info to potentially get into your systems or even use that info against your clients and get into other aspects of their lives. This can be disastrous for your clients and for you as well. Trade secrets and more can also be used against you, and if your data device was used by an employee at some point, the thief might have access to a lot of personal data on that employee as well.



One of the big issues with physical data theft comes down to discovery. Most physical theft occurs in your blind spots. This means a piece of equipment that you weren't monitoring or using gets stolen. A good data thief will know how to use that data to maximize personal gain before they expose the theft. The more time that goes by until discovery, the more damage can be done.

Who Can Fall Prey to Physical Data Theft?

This type of data theft can happen to anyone and depending on the thief and the data involved, the effects can range from mostly harmless to utterly disastrous.

No Such Thing as Too Small for a Data Breach

Not only can any business be subject to physical data theft, but if anything, small businesses are more susceptible. This is because most large companies already have processes in place to ensure the security of their data. We'll get into these processes in a minute.

Not only is a small business more susceptible, but a physical theft can more easily destroy your business by ruining consumer confidence and being exceptionally costly to remedy. Most small businesses do not have the resources to weather that storm.

What You Can Do to Prevent Physical Data Theft

You have to control your physical data. Entrust your employees with devices and ensure that devices are password protected. That is not foolproof, but it can buy you time when a device gets stolen or lost. Most data thefts will occur with devices that you are not using.

What to do with Devices You Are Not Using?

Anything you are not using should be locked up with limited access provided to employees. Ideally, all hard drives should be wiped. We are not talking about formatting, but a professional data wipe.

When a data device is no longer going to be in use, you should have the hard drive professionally destroyed. There are many services out there that will do this, but you should only trust a company that is an i-SIGMA Member and is R2 Certified.