Ask the Prez
By Greg Skalka, President Under the Computer Hood UG, CA
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Dear Readers,

This may or may not be the first of many question-based columns under this title. If there are to be any more is up to you (though I reserve the right to have a say in it as well). I received this email question from a reader of one of my Drive Light 'President's Corner' columns, as republished in another APCUG-group's newsletter. An important source of material for our own group's newsletter is material from other APCUG groups, as compiled for our editor as PUSH emails from APCUG. Our own Drive Light has been a major contributor to this interchange between groups, as many of my columns and many articles by other UCHUG members have been republished in numerous newsletters around the country (and I think around the world). This is a benefit provided by APCUG that is very valuable to our group, providing worthwhile content to our readers and helpful assistance to our hardworking editor.

Any questions you submit to president (at) uchug.org may be reprinted and answered in future columns, if they are of general interest to our readers. Other questions may be answered by email or read to our membership for (hopefully) a solution, at our next UCHUG meeting Random Access session.

Here is a question from Ron Broadhurst, a member of the Space Coast PC Users Group (SCPCUG) in Florida, concerning the file recovery program Recuva, which I talked about in my column "High-Tech Remembering," in the Drive Light October 2017 edition.

Hi Greg,
I just finished reading your article in our Journal SCPSUG published by our own Ron Ingraham.
I was very interested in the article regarding Recuva. There have been a few times I have had to use it. Most always with good results.
I do have a question regarding using it.
Is there some way to remove some of the very old files which I have deleted a long time ago? If it's possible to do this, I suppose Recuva would run faster. Any ideas greatly appreciated.
Thanks
Ron Broadhurst

Ron,

I'm glad you found my article of interest. That was the first and so far, only time I've had a need for Recuva. It is kind of like auto insurance - you (hopefully) don't need it very

often, but when you do, it is invaluable.

I don't recall finding any very old files recovered when I ran Recuva, but I suppose that is possible if you use a memory card or hard drive long enough. Since the operating system does not completely remove a file from a storage device when it deletes it, but merely deletes its entry in the file allocation table (kind of like getting rid of a chapter in a book by only blacking out its entry in the table of contents), the data from some very old files could remain under the right circumstances. If you long ago filled up the drive, then deleted most files and after that kept adding and deleting files while keeping the drive fairly empty on average, some of the data from that initial filling could remain and never be overwritten by new files.

Each time Recuva is run, especially in the most intensive mode, it analyzes the entire drive and should find any very old files whose data still remains there, even if it found those same files the last time Recuva was run on that drive. The only way I can see to prevent this is to wipe the drive of all data, using a program intended to prevent file recovery. Programs like iolo's Drive Scrubber can be used to remove all traces of data from drives, so that they may be donated or disposed of without the risk of having confidential data fall into the wrong hands. It writes data patterns over all of the drive's data locations one or more times to prevent data recovery. To stop Recuva, one complete data overwrite with a scrubbing program should be sufficient.

If you run a drive scrubbing program on your drive after running Recuva, you should not see the files you recovered that time on the drive in subsequent Recuva recoveries. I don't think this will speed up the future recovery time of Recuva any significant amount, however. In its most intensive recovery mode, it must scrutinize all of the drive's memory space, so the time required will be based mostly on the drive size, and not so much on how much data is or is not on the drive.

Ron, this was a good question. I'd like your permission to reprint your question and my response to you in my group's newsletter, for the benefit of our members. Please let me know if you would allow this. Thanks.

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Hi Greg,
Thank you for getting back, appreciate it.
Yes, you may use my question.
Also does that program iolo's Drive Scrubber remove ALL DATA ON THE HARD DRIVE?
Thanks
Ron

Ron,

Drive Scrubber is intended to securely erase all data on a specified drive. It can also just wipe the free space, erasing all remnants of deleted files (this would keep Recuva from recovering any files deleted prior to this). There are a lot of secure erase programs out there, with various features. They are definitely necessary if you intend to sell, donate or recycle a computer or hard drive.

Here is a link to a PC World article on securely erasing hard drives:

[https://www.pcworld.com/article/261702/how_to_securely_erase_your_hard_drive.html](https://www.pcworld.com/article/261702/how_to_securely_erase_your_hard_drive.html)

Greg