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Crash

Photo by Peter Duke.As you drive along the way to Grandma's house this holiday season, safety should be your number one priority. No one wants their vacation to be tarnished by something like a total car or hurting family members. These are the types of accidents that happen most to drivers, as well as how it can be easily avoided. A good night's sleep is important, especially the night before you go out on the road. A recent report... Read more Each year there are more than 6 million car accidents with more than 40,000 deaths related to those accidents, and they are on the rise. Many of these deaths can be avoided by following the most basic safety procedures, such as wearing a seat belt, not driving in a drunken state, and avoiding using your phone while driving. That said, accidents continue to occur due to other causes. Using data collected for the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Motor Vehicle Accident Causation Survey, Steve Casner, a safety expert and author of Careful: A User's Guide to Our Injury-Prone Minds, determined that these are the types of car accidents that occur most: Falling asleep at the wheel: It accounts for about 7% of all accidents , and 21% of fatal accidents. Make sure you get enough sleep before you go out on the road, and have a cup of coffee on the way out. Loss of vehicle control: Represents 11% of all accidents. Always consider other driving variables. Keep in mind the weather, the maintenance of your vehicle and other drivers. Blind Turns left: Represents 12% of all locks. If you can't see around that bus, don't risk driving to the intersection. Always stop and wait until you know the coast is clear. Rear: Represents between 23% and 30% of all locks. Pay attention to the car in front of you, be careful with those brake lights and always give yourself plenty of room to stop if you need it. Don't stay in your lane: Counts approximately 30% of all accidents. When driving, focus on the road; not the people in the car, not their radio, and not their phone. It does not cause a driver to deviate from the lane and cause a serious accident. The rest of the causes involve things like rolling on red lights, which Casner says accounts for 6% of all pedestrian deaths; 21% of whom are children. In addition, the National Motor Vehicle Accident Causation Survey suggests that about 36% of all pre-accident events occurred while drivers rotated or crossed at intersections. That's why it's imperative that you always get to a full stop, then carefully for pedestrians and vehicles before turning or driving through. You can read more data from Casner at the following link. Anatomy of a SlateG/O Media car accident can get a commission as much as we entrust computers with the details of our lives, it only takes a mechanical setback to curse them to doom. However, when things go wrong, it's our lives that fill up Pandemonium. Of course, as in Dante's Hell, there are many degrees of computer-enabled suffering. In fact, although the computer crashes it first described errors that came from a hard drive read/write head that literally crashed against hard drive dishes, the term today extends to any unexpected computer arrest, whether due to software application failures, operating system crashes, or coffee spills on a new laptop. Unexpected program seizures are occasional discomforts that can often be resolved by a simple reboot. However, a system failure or hard drive merge can make programs un viable and destroy files forever, a particularly painful punishment made worse by high-capacity hard drives that allow huge collections of music, video and photos. In other words, when you have everything, you have more to lose. It's too easy for users to continue computing with abandonment, only to become a stroke when things finally go wrong, but even in the face of a computer disaster, there are still ways to troubleshoot and recover data, as long as you understand what might be happening and plan the inevitable. SOFTWARE AND SO PROBLEMS Software and operating system failures occur for many reasons. Newly installed programs may conflict with existing ones. Memory hoarding programs can force computers to steal resources from each other until the entire system stops. Incorrect updates to system files can damage the underlying instructions in the computer's operations core (the kernel - rotating the computer in endless loops and fatal errors. When Windows users experience a fatal error, they are treated with the blue screen of death, that blue-backed diagnostic screen that announces system errors with error messages, hexadecimal codes, and recommendations for further action. Macintosh machines have their own version, the Spinning Beach Death Ball - a standby cursor like the PC's hourglass that can mean anything, since a program is loading to the computer it is hanging and must be restarted. Older Macs, more descriptively, used a pop-up box that showed a bomb with a fuse on. Fortunately, there are some basic steps to reactivate systems after a crash, as well as utilities and, if necessary, third-party services to help return operations to normal. Sometimes a simple restart is enough to reset the machine and make it work again, while in the units should be cleaned and programs reinstalled from scratch. HARDWARE PROBLEMS AND HARD DRIVEProblems with the actual machinery of a computer can present a more difficult problem. The bowels of a computer can become clogged, worn, or fried. Replacing parts and reinstalling drivers can usually extend the life of a failing machine, but when the problem originates from a hard drive, it is not the machinery, but the irreplaceable data within those at greatest risk. Hard drives are not as abundant as their names might imply. They work essentially as small disc players: disc trays enclosed in the drive housing rotate around 150 miles per hour, while delicate read/write heads run back and forth on the surface, held aloft by an air cushion. A speck of dust or grain of sand on the surface can break the arm cushion, causing the head to crash into the plate, scratching the surface and ruining the data. Drive motor bearings can also occur over time, turning that happy whirlwind of a working hard drive into a grinding squeal. Most hard drives are rated for hundreds of thousands of hours of trouble-free operation, but there are obvious exceptions. Hard drive errors abound and grow more likely the longer drives are in use. Hard drives on mobile computers and take-off devices such as music players and games, due to their own portability, have an even greater chance of taking a drive-destroying crash. PROFESSIONAL HELPThe correction of hardware problems is often beyond the capabilities of the average home user, especially after a unit has suffered physical damage. To save what's left of your computer data after a real hardware disaster, you may need to turn to professional help. Fortunately, there are many data recovery services that specialize in saving information from damaged hard drives and pride themselves on their ability to rescue data from computers that have been filmed, flooded, and otherwise unused. Companies such as Ontrack Data Recovery, DriveSavers, and Data Recovery Group can carefully clean, read, and reconstruct information from damaged drive debris, often making them readable again for up to \$2,000 for a full drive. HE'S GONE FOREVER? When the contents of the hard drive have become so corrupted that even professionals can't help, users should accept that their data is gone, but they're only gone forever if there's no other copy. The lesson to learn is to back up your data frequently. Making copies of important files should be a regular matter, made easier by keeping personal files organized, knowing which files are most important and organizing for a backup at least once a week. There are many ways to back up your data. Look for programs like Argentum Backup for a simple backup solution. The \$25 program through personal programs, folders and mail applications to save information and settings. A more complete solution to recover from a data lock is to use an image program like Norton Ghost, which takes a snapshot of a computer's entire hard drive and saves it as a single file. Home network users may have more machines to organize, but there are also options for automating backups on extended computers, including using a dedicated external drive for backups Special network software like the Mirra Personal Server.Will things get better? The next Windows Vista operating system is supposedly more stable, and will decrease the number of crashes that occur with XP and earlier versions. By separating software and hardware drivers from the Vista system core, designers expect to avoid total shutdown of the computer when a part eventually fails. Interenet-based services could also provide a more reliable off-site backup for important files. Web-based email and online storage for photos and files on the portal and community sites are already of some use, but browsing Internet folders can be slow, space may be limited and there is no guarantee that information will be kept forever, so ultimately it is the responsibility of users to keep an eye on their own information. Tim Gnattek is a regular contributor to the New York Times. According to Alan Cooper, the problem with software is not the way it works, but how the industry that makes it work. There is a fundamental problem with the way the software business does things, says Cooper, 46, who started his first software company in 1976; who invented Visual Basic and later sold it to Microsoft; and who now runs Cooper Interaction Design, a 30-person firm based in Palo Alto, California. We are asking people who are masters of hard edge technology to design the soft, human side of the software as well. As a result, they make products that are really great, if you turn out to be a software engineer. Unsurprisingly, Cooper Interaction Design has chosen the Manifest It's a Fact: Most software needs to be whipped. Why such a drastic punishment? Because designers and programmers aren't just building defective products. They are also punishing users and, in the process, doing social and economic damage. We're building what I call 'apartheid software,' Cooper says. We are in the process of creating a divided society: those who can use technology on the one hand, and those who cannot on the other. And it turns out that it divides perfectly along the economic lines. Building great software, Cooper argues, requires adopting a new approach to design, which distinguishes between three challenges: conceptual design, interaction design, and interface design. Conceptual design shapes what a product does. Interaction design determines how it behaves by examining what users are trying to do with it. The design of the interface affects its appearance and feels. Cooper's firm addresses the second challenge: how IT products interact with users, but does not employ a single computer programmer. Cooper's approach to design is gaining many converts, including clients such as Sun Microsystems, Coca-Cola, Compaq and Dow Jones. And it is already being applied to products such as image scanners and computerized medical devices. A few years ago, Cooper Cooper The design began working with Logitech International SA, a leading manufacturer of

mice and other PC peripherals. Logitech asked Cooper to design software for his new Peacock scanners. The purpose of this type of software is to help users edit and manipulate digitized images. But Logitech feared that poor design would cause users to spend more time reconfiguring controls than image editing. The new design simplified the software so dramatically that users now deal with only three image manipulation functions, and do not need problems with a single hardware management feature. I think the phrase 'computer-literate' is an evil phrase, Cooper says. You don't have to be 'full of cars' to get along in this world. You don't have to be telesoplicated. Why would you have to be computer literature? And as computing power intertwines in every aspect of life, poor design threatens to make everything more difficult to use. A revolution is about to happen, Cooper warns. Computer chips are all over it. I have a digital camera that behaves like a computer. I have a cell phone that doesn't behave like a phone: It behaves like a calling computer. Computers are becoming an integral part of daily life. And if people don't start designing them to make them easier to use, then an even larger part of the population is going to be left out of even more. Cooper Interaction Design has been working with Varian Associates Inc., a major electronics company (1998 sales: \$1.4 billion) that manufactures computer systems for medical and industrial instruments. A division of Varian, which builds nuclear magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machines for medical and geological purposes, wanted to simplify the software that controlled the huge magnets of MRIs (some of which are as large as a compact car). Cooper's preliminary research identified three main user groups for a nuclear MRI: scientists who devise methodologies to use the instrument, researchers who use it to develop experiments, and technicians who use it to conduct these experiments. Each category of users has a different need. But Varian MRI's existing interface was designed to serve all three categories at the same time. So it was an incredibly complicated show, Cooper says. It followed the mechanics of what needed to be done, but it didn't follow the way the human mind actually works. Cooper's solution was to create a separate and appropriate interface for each set of users. The MRI underscores an important principle behind Cooper's approach: Less is really more. Cooper improves applications by not adding features, but by removing them. In the software industry, if you can add a feature, you do it, says Cooper. But all too often, features obscure the purpose of a program and make it harder to use. Learn more about Cooper Cooper Web Design (www.cooper.com) or contact Alan Cooper by email (alan@cooper.com). (alan@cooper.com).

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