

## Taking Care of Your New Computer

All of our systems are now built with the highest quality Intel motherboards & components. However, because of the amount of heat generated by today's CPU's, extra care needs to be taken to prevent damage to the system & ensure long term reliability & performance.

**1. When transporting it, make sure it is cushioned** on a seat or something that will absorb road bumps.

**2. We recommend you turn it off when it's not in use.** Older computers used very little energy and generated very little heat. All newer computers are hundreds of times more powerful than older systems and use about 300-500 watts of electricity (equivalent to 3 or 4 light bulbs)—this will add substantially to your power bill. As well, newer systems generate MUCH MORE heat than older systems, and excessive heat is one of the factors in component break-down.

**3. Make sure all fans are working properly.** Usually you can hear a fan when it's failing. But even small amounts of dust & smoke build up on the CPU fan & heatsink and can cause overheating, and may go unnoticed. We recommend bringing the tower in for service about once/year to blow out the case & fans and make sure fans are cooling properly (you service your car regularly, why not your computer?!). Again, older computers could run for years without any service, but this is not true of any and all computers built today—because of the power & heat generated.

**4. Keep away from dust & smoke as much as possible.** Bedrooms are especially bad as lint plugs up fans much more quickly than industrial dust. Smoke & dust are a bad combination as the tar substance from smoke holds the dust & even makes it difficult to blow out the fans. Running the system only when it's being used will also minimize the amount of air & dust going through the fans.

**5. Keep anti-virus and anti-spyware programs up to date & run regularly.** Many different computer problems are caused by viruses & spyware, including problems starting the computer, starting programs, program errors & problems, slow response, ads popping up, etc. See our Virus Handout for more information.

**6. Unplug power & phone connections during lightning or power problems.** Every time severe weather occurs we are flooded with calls the next day with power & modem problems. The odds of something happening to your system are probably a lot greater than you think!

### Common Problems:

**Freezing or Locking up.** This is where keyboard & mouse do not work at all. While this was a fairly common on older computers, this usually does not occur on newer computer systems. About the only time it will happen is when the system is overheating. To prevent permanent damage, it should be turned off immediately & brought in for servicing—more than likely a fan is plugged. Another cause is driver problems or incompatibility with games.

**System Not Responding.** This is where you can move the mouse and sometimes the keyboard, but cannot execute programs or do anything. This is usually virus-related, but can be corrupt system files, driver problems, or a program that is not responding or working properly.

**System Running Much Slower, Pop-up ads.** Usually Virus & Spyware related, but can be caused by a large number of programs running, or by loading a memory-intensive program (like Norton Anti-virus or a large printer program) on an older system.

**“No System Disk” Message when Booting.** Can be caused by a disk in the floppy drive, but could be either a hard drive failure or missing system files due to a virus. Hard drives are still the main problem in computers, as they are a precision mechanical device, and fail regularly. Someone has said quite rightly, it's not whether or not the hard drive will fail, it's a matter of when it will fail. **Always back up critical data.**

**No Lights on Tower.** Generally a power supply problem in the computer, quite often caused by lightning or the power going off & on.

**Lights on the Tower and Monitor, but Screen is Blank.** Try shutting down all power at the power bar, leave it off for a few minutes, and then restart things. Can also be caused by a defective monitor—try substituting a different monitor if one is available. While rare, it can also be a more serious problem with the computer, such as motherboard or video.