

[Backup Tape Media - Care and Handling](#)

Posted on May 06, Posted by [Paul](#) Category [FAQ](#)

To achieve maximum tape media life, users must ensure that media is operated and stored as per the environmental specification. Tape media should be kept away from strong magnetic fields to avoid the risk of data loss. Operating a tape drive within a dirty or dusty environment may affect reliability and could reduce the tape drive and media life. The life of each tape media depends on the way it is utilized and stored, as such we recommend that customers replace daily backup tapes every 12 months.

Handling media (cartridges):

Do not attempt to clean the tape path or tape guides inside the cartridge.

Do not leave cartridges in the drive. The tape loses tension in the power-off state, which can lead to problems, particularly if the drive has been moved.

Do not leave cartridges in excessively dry or humid conditions.

Do not leave cartridges in direct sunlight or in places where magnetic fields are present (for example, under telephones, next to monitors or near transformers).

Do not drop cartridges or handle them roughly.

Stick labels onto the label area only.

Do not bulk erase (or degauss)

Cleaning Tape Drives:

Occasional use of a **Cleaning Cartridge** will remove environment dust that collects on the head area of the tape drum. Tape Heads can be contaminated by environmental dust. Thus, **occasional head cleaning is recommended for all tape drives** (about once every 100 hours of use).

Bad Block, Write & Read Errors:

Poor media condition can cause write errors resulting in the data having to be written again. Be sure your media is in good condition.

Replace the tapes that fail with known good tapes. The particular tapes that are not successfully backing up are most likely defective.

Dirty drive heads and or poor media condition can cause write errors, the data will then be written again, this also reduces tape capacity - Be sure your drive heads are clean and the media is in good condition.

An overstretched tape may record fine, but it **may not restore or read very well**. As a rule, it is a good idea to re-tension a tape before using it. After prolonged use of a tape at the beginning the tape will become tight on one end and loose on the other. Re-tensioning will correct this problem.

Try re-tensioning the tape. This is an important procedure whenever encountering any type of problem with your tapes.

Re-tensioning the tape cartridge is always recommended for optimal performance, particularly if using a new tape, **after exposure to temperature changes or shock**.

Re-tensioning restores the proper tape tension to the media and removes unwanted tight spots that develop naturally on tape.

If a tape cartridge has not been used for over a month, you should re-tension the cartridge before using it.

If you ever have a problem reading a tape, re-tensioning may solve the problem.

See your software manual, or refer to your software's online help for instructions on tape re-tensioning.

If the tape is dropped, re-tension before using it.

Note: In some cases, it may be necessary to re-tension a tape several times.

Try another tape after exiting, then re-starting the software.

For Backup Issues Only:

- Please refer to the "Cleaning the Tape Drive" section in your installation manual or the Maintenance section for your specific tape drive on manufacturer's web site for detailed information.
- **Try initializing the tape to see if that solves the problem.** If not, **do a Long Erase**(if your backup software permits) of the tape before the next backup is attempted. **This will take over 1 hour and will completely wipe the tape. It will leave the format intact.**
- **CAUTION!** A Long Erase or Initializing the media is not an option if you are attempting to restore from the tape in question. Either procedure will remove the tape header and the data will no longer be retrievable from that tape.
- **CAUTION!** Do not attempt to bulk erase a tape as this will render the tape unusable.

If you would like any further information please call us any time between 8.30am and 5.30pm Monday to Friday.

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