Time for an update

When this document was first produced back in 2001 data recovery was (and still is for many) a very expensive option. While the Freeze it, Hit it, and Drop it options are still employed by some, the current size and sensitivity of the newer larger hard drives makes these options extremely risky and definitely NOT recommended for hard drives with a capacity that's greater than 1 gig. And even then some of the operation suggested here should be approached with caution. Getting it wrong by trying to save some money will only end up costing you more if you then decide to pass on your hard drive to a data recovery company…

There are, broadly speaking three classes of data recovery, Logical, Electronic, and Physical.
- Logical
  Where the FAT, NTFS or other file structure has been corrupted either by accident or on purpose or individual filed or folders have gone missing. The hard drive has not suffered damage to the components of the hard drive itself.
- Electronic
  Component failure on the PCB (the circuit board on the bottom of the hard drive) in the motor or internally.
- Physical
  Internal damage to the hard drive, damaged platters, head crashes, damage to the motor, or head rack signal amplifier. You need a clean room and plenty of experience to have any chance of a successful outcome here.

Logical recoveries are becoming an affordable option for those people who are familiar with the risks involved with data recovery. Software tools that are now available for this task vary greatly in their capability, complexity and cost.

Careful research should be done before any work is done on the damaged hard drive. If you are able, get another hard drive and experiment. Format it, Fdisk it, delete files and partitions and learn how the data recovery software operates under these various conditions.

Before to start work on your own or your clients hard drive back it up, the backup mantra is one that you all should be familiar with by now! There are tools available to backup (or image) a hard drive that has been fdisked!! Use them. Ghost software is not suitable for this task, then perform your recovery attempts on the image not the original.