

## Keep your laptop safe

Walk through any airport and you'll see laptop computers everywhere. You'll see businessmen filling out expense vouchers, teenagers watching the latest blockbuster movie, bored holiday travelers connecting to the Internet. These portable computers offer convenience and the ability to work, play, and stay connected anywhere. They also offer an enticing target for thieves.

To keep your laptop computer safe from rip-off artists and crooks, follow these simple rules:

- **Maintain eye contact.** Think of your laptop as a wad of hundred-dollar bills. Would you turn your back on a huge bank roll and leave it sitting on the table while you saunter through the restaurant to fetch another package of ketchup? One study found that a laptop computer is stolen every 53 seconds. Another study found that 1 in 10 laptops is eventually stolen or lost, and 97% of them are never recovered. If you don't want your laptop to become a statistic, keep an eye on it.
- **Stay in touch.** If you must set your laptop bag on the floor at a busy location (like an airport restaurant or departure gate), put it between your legs. If you maintain physical contact and a thief tries to abscond with your bag, you'll feel it. Better yet, keep your laptop in a shoulder bag and off the floor.
- **Be secure at the security checkpoint.** Airport representatives have reported that the most common locations for lost or missing laptops are security checkpoints (40%) and departure gates (23%). If possible, hold your laptop until just before you step through the metal detector, then pick it up as quickly as possible. Sometimes thieves work in teams to purposely hold up travelers in an effort to steal computers and other valuables. Don't give them an opportunity.
- **Lock it up.** Even business offices with locking doors and honest staff can be hunting grounds for crooks. When you're headed to lunch or the conference room, it's a good idea to use a cable lock or other restraint to keep your laptop safe.
- **Backup critical data.** The information on your laptop may be more valuable than the hardware itself. Regularly copy sensitive files to a hard drive or other storage device and keep those files in a safe location.