Backup Using FTP

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The next most important task after backing up your data files is to ensure that your backups are stored safely, preferably offsite. You could physically move backup media, for example tapes and CDs, to offsite locations. This can be rather tedious and time consuming and often very inconvenient. A simpler solution is backing up to a server that is kept offsite via FTP.

What is FTP?

File Transfer Protocol (FTP) is a language used for transferring files from computer to computer across the World Wide Web (WWW). FTP alone is not secure and it is advisable to encrypt files before the transfer. That is the reason why there are FTP protocols like SFTP and FTPS. Although relatively few FTP servers support these secure protocols, it is good to be informed about them.

SFTP

SFTP or Secure FTP is a program that uses a secure shell (SSH) to transfer data files. SSH is a network protocol that allows for the secure exchange of data between computers. Therefore with SFTP, commands and data are both encrypted thus preventing passwords and other sensitive information from being transmitted in readable form over the network.

SFTP uses a different protocol to standard FTP, therefore an FTP client is unable to communicate with an SFTP server. Similarly, an FTP server will not be able to connect to a client that only supports SFTP. A common misconception is that SFTP is FTP run over SSH, and that it is also sometimes confused with Simple File Transfer Protocol, an unsecured file transfer protocol.

FTPS

FTPS (commonly referred to as FTP/SSL) is FTP with the added option of Secure Socket Layer (SSL) security, where SSL allows data to be transmitted via the Internet securely. In other words, FTPS is a standard FTP software in which SSL is used to secure the control and data connection. Each way involves the use of an SSL/TLS layer below the standard FTP protocol to encrypt the control and/or data channels. It should not be confused with SSH file transfer protocol, or FTP over SSH. Transport Layer Security (TLS) and its predecessor, Secure Sockets Layer (SSL), are cryptographic protocols which provide secure communications over the Internet.

FTP over SSH

FTP over SSH refers to the practice of "tunnelling" a normal FTP session over an SSH (secure shell) connection.

Backup Software that support FTP backups

There are several backup software programs on the market that support FTP backups. 2BrightSparks Pte Ltd carries two options of backup software that support FTP backups. They include SyncBackFree, and SyncBackSE, which is shareware. As far as FTP capabilities go, SyncBackSE has a much higher performance compared to SyncBackFree. Both SyncBackFree and SyncBackSE provide encryption options and therefore allow for added security of data files with just standard FTP backups. SyncBackSE supports FTPS as well. Third party programs, like WebDrive (commercial) and NetDrive (freeware), allow access to SFTP servers as if they were local hard drives. In this way, SyncBackSE can access the SFTP server as if it was a local hard drive.

So remember. Backing up your data files is important, but you also need to think about keeping those backups safe so that in the event you need to restore your data, your backups are easily accessible.

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