

# Battery backup units — why you need them

One of the easiest ways to protect your investment in computer equipment is to be sure to have an uninterruptable power supply between the computer and the outlet; UPS for short. You can purchase a simple power strip at the local store, all the way up to sophisticated UPS devices that can be programmed to shut down equipment in a specific order and send alerts. There are various size units to consider, so when should you use which devices, and why?

When the power supply is too high or too low, the UPS device will protect your equipment. Most people are aware of power surges and how risky they can be for electronics, but did you know that 'brown outs' are also hard on the equipment? That's when the outlet experiences a significant reduction in power to the equipment. A UPS device will also clean up the power before it hits your equipment; 'dirty' power can reduce equipment life.

Sizing the unit is the key, so check on the wattage requirements of the



**CATHERINE WENDT**

equipment(s) you intend to plug into the device. Do you have multiple computers or servers in the same device? Add up the wattage requirements and the expected battery life (time) when the power is lost. The most common issue we run into as an IT Service Provider is when we quote the right device size, then our customer purchases it on their own because they found a 'deal' that was much less expensive. When we arrive, the unit is not appropriate and will not support the equipment, so the client now has to spend time and money returning the device, we have to make another trip, and the original unit has to be purchased after all. When you ask an expert, especially

someone you know and trust, it's better to ask questions about the differences, since ignoring their advice can be a costly mistake. I know our techs are more than happy to share their knowledge and appreciate the question!

So what equipment needs to be plugged into a UPS device? Servers are an obvious one. Consider a unit that at least has the ability to send alerts via email or text. If there are multiple computers plugged into the same UPS, or multiple servers on a large hosting computer, we recommend a unit that can be configured to shut down servers in a specific order and within a specific time-frame keeping in mind the size of the battery so the server(s) does not go down 'hard' during an outage. Workstations should also be plugged into a UPS device to protect them from power surges, brown outs, and dirty power.

Here are a couple of other things our Techs want you to know:

- When you have 3-phase power,

UPS units will protect you and a surge protector won't; check your electrical panel or call your power company

- APC is a brand name for UPS devices

- Triplite units are NOT recommended to protect your computer electronics

- Plug printers into the Surge port on the unit; these are clearly labeled on the device; different 'plugs' provide different protection so don't hesitate to ask

Considering how much money we spend on computer equipment, not to mention maintaining it, an APC device is a very worthwhile investment. You count on your IT Company to be experts in computer-related topics, and battery protection of computer equipment is definitely one of them. For this IT Service provide, I can tell you we love this stuff!

- *Catherine Wendt is president of Syscon Inc., a technology solutions business based in Hinsdale.*