

Re: How to backup the MBR?

Source:

<http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/WinXP/microsoft.public.windowsxp.general/2004-05/18725.html>

From: I'm Dan (*dgREMOVE-THIS1261_at_cs.com*)

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"*Vanguard*" <no-email@reply-to-newsgroup.invalid> wrote:

> *I have PartitionMagic 8 but don't see anywhere within it how to*
> *make a backup copy of the MBR (master boot record) and restore*
> *it. I also have DriveImage 2002 and don't see it backup up the*
> *MBR, either. Both work on partitions but do nothing to let me*
> *backup and restore the MBR.*

Correct, and for good reason. Whenever PM or DI changes, moves, or restores a partition, it *must* confirm or rewrite the partition table parameters to make sure they are consistent with the changes made. Backing up the partition table is therefore moot because PM or DI (and Ghost, Acronis, et al) will always make sure the partition table fits the restored partition(s). And *not* backing up/restoring the partition table makes it possible to restore the partitions on replacement disks with different parameters, or in different locations on the disk.

PM/DI won't check the boot code in the MBR, but for most people that's pretty much a non-issue because the mere 450-odd bytes of the boot code is very easily restored via fixboot or fdisk /mbr. However, this is not to say backing up track 0 isn't worthwhile for a *small* group of people. If you're using a third-party boot manager, a bios extension overlay (e.g., ez-bios or disk manager), or as you mentioned, special encryption overlay, then yes, backing up the customized track 0 may be a good idea -- as long as you understand it has its own caveats. But it should not be rolled into PM or DI as an automatic procedure because that has the potential of causing problems for the majority of users. It should be a separate, deliberate operation.

> *There are definite reasons NOT to use FIXMBR (from*
> *Windows XP) or FDISK /MBR (from a Windows 9x boot*
> *floppy); see <http://www.cknow.com/vtutor/vtfdiskmbr.htm>.*

Boy, that guy goes overboard. Yes, there are a *few* reasons one may not want to use fixboot or fdisk /mbr, but how many people fall into those categories? Fixboot and fdisk /mbr are useful tools in the right circumstances. Saying you should never use fixboot or fdisk /mbr is like

saying you should stay off the freeway because you might get killed out there.

Third-party boot managers and bios extension overlays can be easily restored/reinstalled. If you're using special encryption overlay (and how many people fit this category?), then hopefully you're technically savvy enough to know about the special requirements of the software, or else you'll probably lock yourself out at some point anyway. And if you have the monkey virus . . . well, let's just say that, like all viruses, you should research how to *properly* remove the virus. Even then, a fixboot with DI partition restorations will return you to a working system.

> *So I need to figure out how to do a backup of my MBR ...*

Use MBRWork, a free utility from www.bootitng.com. Boot from a DOS boot disk, run mbrwork.exe, and save track 0 to a file.