

Technology Corner
By: George Champine

Monitoring Temperature While Away

Many of us are away from Quailrun for weeks or months in the winter time. A heating system can fail for a number of causes. The thermostat can fail as mine did. The igniter, which has a life of 4-6 years, can fail, or the furnace may not come back on after a power failure even though it is supposed to. If the heating system fails, the plumbing can freeze up and split the pipes, with serious consequences.

One way to help the situation is to use a freeze monitor. It will monitor the temperature and if it falls below a minimum it will dial a phone number and report the problem. Prices for freeze monitors range from about \$80 to \$200. The basic models have a fixed temperature for alarm (usually about 45 degrees) and dial one phone number. The deluxe models have an alarm temperature that can be set, and can dial up to three phone numbers. For an example, see

http://www.amazon.com/o/ASIN/B00066939M/ref=s9_asin_title/104-0738263-8036765

Recovering from computer problems

Computers can suffer from many kinds of problems, such as spyware, a virus attack, or hardware failure. For this reason it is important to do periodic backups of at least the "My Documents" folder to a CD or thumb drive. However, backups of this nature will not help recovery from a serious virus attack, spyware attack, or disk failure.

I have recently started using a recovery tool that can take care of all of these problems. It is a software package that creates a complete disk image. I make the image when the machine is operating properly. Then if something goes wrong, the computer can always be restored to exactly the state it was in before the problem. If the disk fails, the image can be restored to a new disk. If the computer is infected with viruses or spyware that can not be removed, restoring the image fully corrects the problem. Because I have important information on my computers, I have made disk images of all of my computers. There are several packages that can do this. My preference is for "Acronis True Image" available from Amazon for about \$30.

Next offering of computer training courses

The location of the computer training courses is being moved from the Hudson Senior Center to the Hudson High School. The beginning course, taught by John Greelis, will be offered on Wednesdays at 2:15 starting January 17. You can register by calling the Hudson Senior Center at 978-568-9638.

The Intermediate course, which I teach, will be offered on Tuesdays at 2:45 PM starting on February 6 and running for six weeks. A new session has been added to my training course entitled "Multimedia and Using Your computer as an Entertainment Center". Just as 78 RPM and 33 RPM records have gone away, music CDs are going away being replaced by Internet downloads and iPods. Television and telephone are also being replaced by the Internet. You can register by sending e-mail to me at

george.champine@computer.org . Both classes have size limits so sign up early if you are interested.