

Dangerous setting is dangerous: This is why you shouldn't turn off write cache buffer flushing

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Okay, one more time about the *Write-caching policy* setting.

This dialog box takes various forms depending on what version of Windows you are using.

Windows XP:

Enable write caching on the disk

This setting enables write caching in Windows to improve disk performance, but a power outage or equipment failure might result in data loss or corruption.

Windows Server 2003:

Enable write caching on the disk

Recommended only for disks with a backup power supply. This setting further improves disk performance, but it also increases the risk of data loss if the disk loses power.

Windows Vista:

Enable advanced performance

Recommended only for disks with a backup power supply. This setting further improves disk performance, but it also increases the risk of data loss if the disk loses power.

Windows 7 and 8:

Turn off Windows write-cache buffer flushing on the device

To prevent data loss, do not select this check box unless the device has a separate power supply that allows the device to flush its buffer in case of power failure.

Notice that the warning text gets more and more scary each time it is updated. It starts out just by saying, “If you lose power, you might have data loss or corruption.” Then it adds a recommendation, “Recommended only for disks with a backup power supply.” And then it comes with a flat-out directive: “Do not select this check box unless the device has a separate power supply.”

The scary warning is there for a reason: If you check the box when your hardware does not satisfy the criteria, *you risk data corruption.*

But it seems that even with the sternest warning available, people will still go in and check the box even though their device does not satisfy the criteria, and the dialog box says right there *do not select this check box.*

And then they complain, “I checked this box, and my hard drive was corrupted! You need to investigate the issue and release a fix for it.”

Dangerous setting is dangerous.

At this point, I think the only valid “fix” for this feature would be to remove it entirely. This is why we can’t have dangerous things.

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