

Clear Reassures Customers on Data Safety; IT Expert Question Methods

Posted by [Benet Wilson](#) at 7/1/2009 1:00 PM CDT

The Clear registered traveler kiosk at Orlando International Airport Photo by Benet Wilson

As Verified Identity Pass (VIP) tries to sell the assets of the Clear registered traveler program, it is also scrambling to reassure customers it abandoned when it shut down abruptly June 23 that their private data is safe. But the company's customer service unit has been shut down, so the only way customers are receiving information is from the company's sparse web site.

Today's issue of *Aviation Daily* includes my [story](#) (subscribers only) updating Clear's efforts to sell its customers's data and what will be done with said data if it can't be sold to another registered traveler program.

If VIP is unable to sell the data of its 250,000 customers, it will be destroyed as part of the closure process, said Jason Slibeck, VIP's chief technology officer.

"Currently, each hard disk at the airport, including the enrollment and verification kiosks, has now been wiped clean of all data and software," said Slibeck. "The triple wipe process we used automatically and completely overwrites the contents of the entire disk, including the operating system, the data and the file structure. This process also prevents or thoroughly hinders all known techniques of hard disk forensic analysis."

Now I am not a computer data specialist, but I was curious to see if this was an accepted procedure to handle personal data that included fingerprints, iris scans, social security numbers and credit card information. So I went to my old reliable [Help A Reporter Out](#) to find myself an IT expert.

I received an email from Bob Venero, CEO of Holbrook, N.Y.-based [Future Tech Enterprise](#). Venero's company offers end-to-end IT solutions and counts JetBlue, Northrop-Grumman, and Raytheon among his clients. And he just joined Clear two weeks ago.

During our chat yesterday, the first question I asked was what he thought of the triple wipe process described by Slibeck. The three pass method is one of the lower levels of data destructions, said Venero.

"What should be happening is degousing. That's where a high-powered magnet is passed over a data drive," Venero explained. "That wipes the drive clean and then the shredding process should take place after that."

The triple wipe is not the highest level of cleaning, especially from a Dept. of Defense perspective, Venero stated.



Lockheed Martin manages Clear's central data centers, located in Orlando, said Slibeck. "When it is time to delete the information, the drives will be shredded. This destruction process will be witnessed and certified," he explained. "The destruction process will be conducted in full compliance with the physical destruction criteria set forth in various laws and regulations covering the shredding process."

Venero questioned what would happen with the back-up data and what medium was used -- tape or something else. "Where are their backups: on site or in other locations? You also need to look at who were the personnel who went to Clear's airports to do the wiping," he said.

"Were they Clear people or just third-party operators? Who was contracted and were they foreign nationals? That is pertinent to the process," he stated.

I asked Venero how he would have handled the Clear shut down. "We would have made sure all personnel were cleared U.S. citizens and that each had government top secret clearance. That is extremely important," he noted.

Second, his company would have taken three groups to each Clear airport site. "One would have secured the area, the second would have done the actual data degousing and shredding and one would have observed the entire process for integrity purposes," said Venero.

I received 16 replies to my IT query about Clear's practices and each one offered variations on the advice offered by Venero. It will be interesting to see how the data dump is handled if Clear is unable to sell its customers to another RT provider. Watch this space!