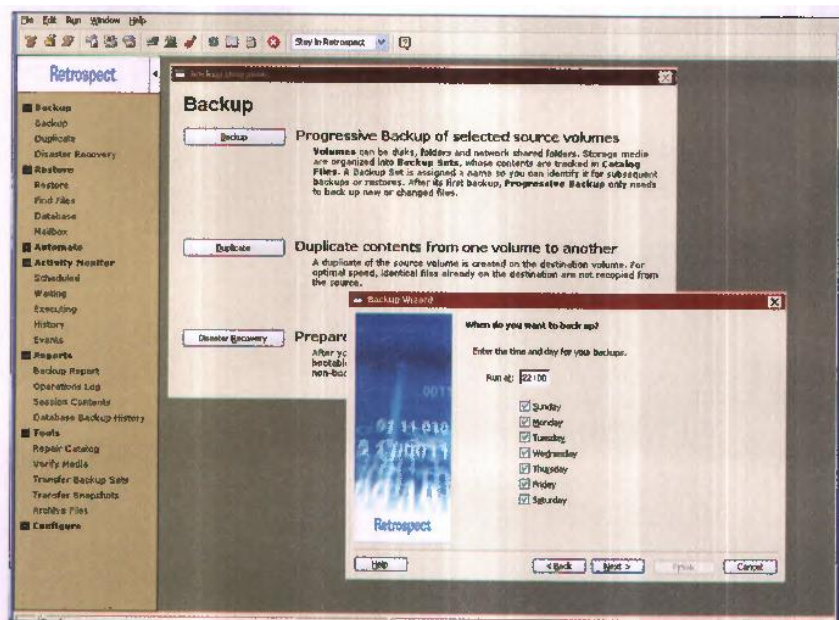


EMC Retrospect 7.5

Never lose a file again using this versatile backup application



Each backup set contains a complete inventory of the files on the host system, so recovering lost data is easy

A member of the EMC Insignia family of small-business products, Retrospect is a deceptively easy yet versatile backup application that does away with the need for the complex media rotation schemes required with some alternative products. It can also take backups to a wide range of devices other than tape drives, including writeable CD/DVD drives and Nas appliances, plus removable disk systems such as the DX115 from Storcase, reviewed on page 128.

Several versions of the EMC software are available, all written to run on Windows (32 and 64-bit versions), and a Mac client is also available. We tested Retrospect Professional, designed to protect up to three Windows desktops or notebooks, with a single server version (£699 ex Vat) and multiserver package (£1,449 ex Vat) also available. The multiserver version provides facilities to back up unlimited networked clients.

Alternatively, if you're using Microsoft's Small Business Server, the Retrospect Small Business Server package (£499 ex Vat) is worth looking at as it includes tools to protect the bundled Exchange and SQL Server programs at no extra charge.

Whatever the version, installation takes no more than a couple of minutes, and it doesn't take much more than that to start taking backups. Wizards are provided to guide you through the steps involved, and an alternative advanced mode is available for anyone wanting more control over the process.

The expected facilities to schedule and automate backups are provided, along with tools to initialise and check on media availability and monitor activity. You also get built-in reporting facilities, plus compression and data encryption options, support for virus scanning and the backup of Registry and other system information.

It's all quick and easy, thanks mainly to a patented technology known as progressive backup. Rather than create backups from scratch every time, this adds files to existing backup sets, only ever backing up each file once to a media set until it has changed in some way, optionally rotating sets for extra security.

The end result is that there's no such thing as an incremental backup with Retrospect. Each backup set contains a complete inventory of the files on the host system, making it easier to recover lost data. When updated files are added to the backup, earlier copies are retained along with detailed file system snapshots, making it possible to recover to different versions as well.

Of course, to start with, each backup will take a while to run as the backup set is seeded with files. However, once this has been done, subsequent backups can be completed in minutes, compared with the hours it takes using more conventional products.

Restoring files is equally straightforward, with a user-driven web interface in this latest release. However, the Retrospect approach can sometimes be too easy. For example, it's not always obvious when things go wrong, and the progressive backup technology can make it difficult to troubleshoot.

That apart, Retrospect is a comprehensive backup program, whose latest 7.5 release contains useful client distribution tools. Full 'bare metal' disaster recovery is another valuable option (standard in both packages), with add-ons to handle Exchange, SQL Server and more general open file backups. An advanced tape support pack for multidrive tape libraries further rounds off this impressive yet easy-to-use backup solution.

Alan Stevens

Details

Price From £151.58 (£129 ex Vat)
Best price www.pcw.co.uk/bestprices
Contact EMC (+33) 1 5533 0200
www.emcinsignia.com

System requirements Windows 98 SE or later for desktop backup, Windows NT4 (SP6) or above for servers • Pentium-class processor (1.5GHz or greater recommended) • 256MB Ram • 1GB free disk space • Supported standalone tape drive, autoloader or library • Local or networked hard disk • Writeable CD/DVD drive • Removable disk system

Verdict

Pros Fast backup times; easy to manage; disk-to-disk and Nas backup support; user-driven restores; restore to previous file versions; disaster recovery option

Cons Can be difficult to troubleshoot when things go wrong; add-ons can be pricey

Features ★★★★★
Ease of use ★★★★★
Value for money ★★★★★

Overall A comprehensive yet easy-to-use application that takes the hassle out of small-business backups

★★★★★