CICADA RESOURCES

DATA · 30 MIN · ESSENTIAL · UPDATED NOVEMBER 2026

Test a restore before you need one

The twenty-minute exercise that turns a backup from a promise into evidence.

The short version

- ✓ Restore a real file, not a test file created for the occasion.
- ✓ Time it. Recovery always takes longer than expected.
- ✓ Record what broke and fix it the same week.
- ✓ Test twice a year, and after changing backup tools.

Pick a realistic target

Choose a file or folder that matters and that someone would notice: last month's invoices, a customer contract, the accounts file. Restore it to a different location so you don't overwrite the live version. Note the start and finish time.

Do the restore

01 Find the backup version from a specific date.

02 Restore to a clean folder or a spare device.

03 Open the file. Check it isn't corrupt or an older version than expected.

04 Record the time taken and who did it.

05 Delete the restored copy when you're satisfied, or move it into place deliberately.

If you use a managed provider, ask them to demonstrate a restore rather than sending you a report. Watch them do it.

Then test the harder scenario

Once a year, walk through a fuller recovery: a lost laptop, a deleted mailbox, a server that won't start. Who would do it? How long would it take? What would the business do in the meantime? You don't need a full disaster simulation; a tabletop conversation with the right people exposes most of the gaps.

> **RECORD IT**
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> Insurers and auditors increasingly ask for evidence of restore testing. Keep a simple log: date, data, time taken, result, action.

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Action checklist

- [ ] Real file restored from backup
- [ ] Time taken recorded
- [ ] Restore log updated
- [ ] Failures fixed and re-tested
- [ ] Annual fuller recovery walkthrough booked
- [ ] Recovery keys verified as accessible

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