

This USB 'kill cord' can instantly wipe your laptop if snatched or stolen



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@zackwhittaker / 1:00 AM GMT+1 • December 17, 2021



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Image Credits: BusKill

Journalists, activists and human rights defenders face a constant battle to keep files safe from a growing set of digital threats and surveillance. But physical attacks can be challenging to defend against, whether an opportunist snatch-and-grab thief or an oppressive government kicking down someone's door.

This week, a project called BusKill launched a custom USB magnetic breakaway cable that acts as a "dead man's switch," locking a computer if someone physically snatches it and severs the

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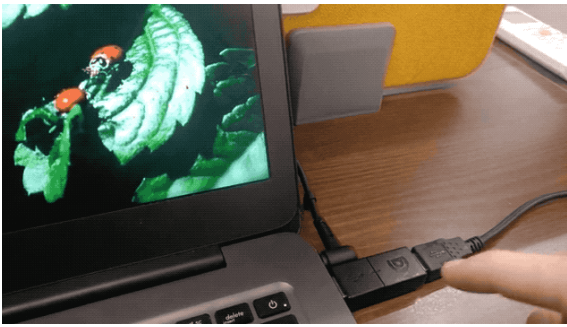
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*The BusKill cable locking a computer when the severed.
(Image Credits BusKill)*

BusKill has been in the works for more than two years as a [do-it-yourself project](#). Anyone with the hardware could compile the source code, but it only worked on Linux and components quickly sold out.

After a [crowdsourcing effort](#), the cable is now available to buy starting at \$59 and has an accompanying app that works on macOS, Windows and Linux, allowing the person using the cable to easily arm and disarm the cable with a touch of a button.

“Most people aren’t handling top-secret documents from whistleblowers and worried about the secret police knocking down their doors, but that’s the level of risk that I designed BusKill for,” the project’s creator Michael Altfield told TechCrunch. “And I wanted it to be accessible to journalists who don’t necessarily use Linux and don’t know how to use the CLI [command line interface].”

BusKill is designed to lock your computer when it’s physically separated from you, but Linux users can further configure the app to trigger a self-destruct command, which scrambles the device’s cryptographic keys, rendering the computer’s data unusable in just a few seconds.

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The project also plans to release triggers that shut down a computer when the magnetic cable is severed.

Although Altfield said BusKill was designed with journalists and activists in mind, the cable can also protect the computers of travelers on vacation and other high-risk users, like crypto traders.

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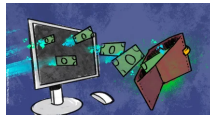
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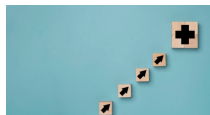


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