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## Windows 7 - Startup Repair Infinite Loop Recovery

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### Startup Repair Infinite Loop Recovery

*How to Recover from an Infinitely Looping Startup Repair Loop without Reinstalling Windows*  
 Published by [Dzomlija](#)  
 01-22-2011

 **Startup Repair Infinite Loop Recovery**

## How to Recover from an Infinitely Looping Startup Repair Loop without Reinstalling Windows

If you've ever experienced a [Startup Repair](#) that continuously loops and fails to fix the problem of not being able to load windows, even in safe mode, then you'll know that usually the only way to recover from this when System Restore does not work is to do a [clean install](#) of Windows.

Until now.

This tutorial will show you how to use the [System Recovery Options](#) provided by Windows to recover your system to a working state so that you don't have to risk losing data by performing a clean install.

 **Warning**

The instructions presented within this tutorial must be followed correctly, or you can damage your Windows 7 installation even further. This tutorial is designed to help recover from a bad registry that is causing the startup repair loop. You should note that there may still be some issues remaining that cannot be fixed by manually restoring the registry.

**Published by** 

**Dzomlija**  
 Dark Lord of the Sith  
 **SUPPORTER**  
 **DEVELOPER**  
 **SF TEAM**  
 Join Date: Oct 2008  
 Posts: 1,322  


**Tutorial Tools** 

 [Printable Version](#)

## Recovering Your System

1. Boot to the [System Recovery Options](#) screen.
  - If Windows automatically opens Startup Repair, and subsequently fails to fix a problem, you can skip ahead to step 4 below.
2. In the *System Recovery Options* screen, click **Startup Repair**:



3. Windows will search for an attempt to repair startup problems:



4. If startup problems could not be repaired, you will receive the message **Windows cannot repair this computer automatically**. Click **View advanced options for system recovery and support**:



5. Click **View advanced options for system recovery and support**, which which bring you back to the main **System Recovery Options** screen.
6. Click **Command Prompt**:



7. Command Prompt should open to X:, which is an internal ram disk use by System Repair:



8. Now you need to find your system drive. Depending on how your system is setup, this could be either C: or D:.

I. Type **C:** and press **<ENTER>**.

II. Verify that this is your system drive by typing **DIR** and pressing **<ENTER>**. If you see the **Program Files**, **Users** and **Windows** folders, then you have found your system drive, and can continue to step 9 below.

III. If the drive is not your system drive, repeat steps I and II above, changing the drive letter to D, E or some other letter until the system drive is located.



9. When you have located your Windows system drive, type **CD \windows\system32\config** and press **<ENTER>**:

10. Type **DIR** and press **<ENTER>**, and verify that the following files and folders exist in the **config** folder:
- o RegBack (which is a folder)
  - o DEFAULT
  - o SAM
  - o SECURITY
  - o SOFTWARE
  - o SYSTEM



11. Type **MD mybackup** and press **<ENTER>** to create a backup folder that you can use in case this procedure does not work as expected.
12. Type **copy \*.\* mybackup** and press **<ENTER>**.
- o If you are prompted to overwrite existing files, press **A** to allow all backups to be overwritten.

```

C:\Windows\System32>dir
Volume in drive C: has no label.
Volume Serial Number is 0002-100F

Directory of C:\Windows\System32\config

2012-07-11 08:15 AM <DIR>
2012-07-11 11:59 AM <DIR> 26,000,000 SOFTWARE
2012-07-11 08:10 AM <DIR> 262,144 SAM
2012-07-11 08:11 AM <DIR> 262,144 SECURITY
2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 9,900,000 SYSTEM
2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 27,981,572 SYSTEM5
2012-07-11 10:28 AM <DIR> 1 Files(s) 117,435,796 Bytes Free
2 Files(s) 117,435,796 Bytes Free

C:\Windows\System32>
  
```

13. Now you need to check if you can use the automatic Windows backups to restore your registry:
- Type **CD RegBack** and press **<ENTER>** to go to the **RegBack** folder.
  - Type **DIR** and press **<ENTER>** to view the contents of the folder. All the following files must exist:
    - The **DEFAULT**, **SAM** and **SECURITY** files should each be about 262,000 bytes in size.
    - The **SOFTWARE** file should be about 26,000,000 bytes.
    - The **SYSTEM** file should be about 9,900,000 bytes.
    - The file sizes presented here are approximate estimations, and may vary depending on your system. *If any one of them are 0 bytes, then you should stop what you're doing now and seek an alternative method of recovering your system, because Windows cannot function with a 0-byte size registry hive.*
  - If the hive files listed in **RegBack** are ok, then proceed to step 14 of the tutorial.

```

C:\Windows\System32>cd regback
Volume in drive C: has no label.
Volume Serial Number is 0002-100F

Directory of C:\Windows\System32\config\regback

2012-07-11 08:09 AM <DIR>
2012-07-11 08:09 AM <DIR> 26,000,000 SOFTWARE
2012-07-11 08:11 AM <DIR> 262,144 SAM
2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 262,144 SECURITY
2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 9,900,000 SYSTEM
2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 27,981,572 SYSTEM5
2 Files(s) 117,435,796 Bytes Free

C:\Windows\System32>dir
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Directory of C:\Windows\System32\config\regback

2012-07-11 08:09 AM <DIR>
2012-07-11 08:09 AM <DIR> 26,000,000 SOFTWARE
2012-07-11 08:11 AM <DIR> 262,144 SAM
2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 262,144 SECURITY
2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 9,900,000 SYSTEM
2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 27,981,572 SYSTEM5
2 Files(s) 117,435,796 Bytes Free

C:\Windows\System32>
  
```

14. Type **copy \*.\* ..** and press **<ENTER>** to copy the backup hive files to **\Windows\System32\config**.
- If you are prompted to overwrite existing files, press **A** to allow all file to be overwritten.

```

C:\Windows\System32>cd regback
Volume in drive C: has no label.
Volume Serial Number is 0002-100F

Directory of C:\Windows\System32\config\regback

2012-07-11 08:09 AM <DIR>
2012-07-11 08:09 AM <DIR> 26,000,000 SOFTWARE
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2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 262,144 SECURITY
2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 9,900,000 SYSTEM
2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 27,981,572 SYSTEM5
2 Files(s) 117,435,796 Bytes Free

C:\Windows\System32>cd ..
Volume in drive C: has no label.
Volume Serial Number is 0002-100F

Directory of C:\Windows\System32\config

2012-07-11 08:09 AM <DIR>
2012-07-11 08:09 AM <DIR> 26,000,000 SOFTWARE
2012-07-11 08:11 AM <DIR> 262,144 SAM
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2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 9,900,000 SYSTEM
2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 27,981,572 SYSTEM5
2 Files(s) 117,435,796 Bytes Free

C:\Windows\System32>
  
```

15. Type **exit** and press **<ENTER>** to close the command prompt.

```

C:\Windows\System32>cd regback
Volume in drive C: has no label.
Volume Serial Number is 0002-100F

Directory of C:\Windows\System32\config\regback

2012-07-11 08:09 AM <DIR>
2012-07-11 08:09 AM <DIR> 26,000,000 SOFTWARE
2012-07-11 08:11 AM <DIR> 262,144 SAM
2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 262,144 SECURITY
2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 9,900,000 SYSTEM
2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 27,981,572 SYSTEM5
2 Files(s) 117,435,796 Bytes Free

C:\Windows\System32>cd ..
Volume in drive C: has no label.
Volume Serial Number is 0002-100F

Directory of C:\Windows\System32\config

2012-07-11 08:09 AM <DIR>
2012-07-11 08:09 AM <DIR> 26,000,000 SOFTWARE
2012-07-11 08:11 AM <DIR> 262,144 SAM
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2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 9,900,000 SYSTEM
2012-07-11 08:13 AM <DIR> 27,981,572 SYSTEM5
2 Files(s) 117,435,796 Bytes Free

C:\Windows\System32>exit
  
```

16. Click the Restart button to reboot your computer. If all goes well, your system will boot normally.



## Reference Information

This tutorial was made possible after learning how to manually replace the Windows 7 Registry Hives after reading the [Recovering Windows 7 Registry Hives/Files](#) article on Microsoft Technet.

### Related Tutorials

- [Advanced Boot Options](#)
- [System Recovery Options](#)
- [System Repair Disc Create](#)
- [How to Run a Startup Repair in Windows 7](#)
- [Startup Repair - Run 3 Separate Times to Repair Boot Issues](#)

Reply

01-22-2011

#1

**thefabe**

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Good information wanted to rep you on it.  
Fabe

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#2

**theog**

ME/XP/Vista/Win7

Nice work.

[9,287 posts](#)[uk Hampshire](#)

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01-25-2011

#3

## Bare Foot Kid

Well done Peter.

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#4

## wigwam

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You do know doing a chkdsk normally repairs this or if you go to F8 and disable automatic restarts on system failure.

work on a help desk and this normally resolves the issue

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01-26-2011

#5

## Dzomlija

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*You do know doing a chkdsk normally repairs this or if you go to F8 and disable automatic restarts on system failure.*

*work on a help desk and this normally resolves the issue*

CHKDSK is actually part of what Startup Repair does, but **normally resolves the issue** is not the same as **always resolves the issue**. I developed the tutorial after *all attempts* at solving the infinite repair loop on a customer laptop failed, attempts which included running a manual CHKDSK from the command line 3 times, 2 of which with scanning for and re-evaluating bad clusters enabled.

I eventually adapted a technique I used often with Windows XP as a last ditch effort before performing a data backup and re-install of Windows 7. And I'm pleased to say that it worked perfectly, the results of which led directly to the creation of this tutorial.

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01-28-2011

#6

## Baton Charge

[Windows 7 and XP](#)[6 posts](#)

Peter, looks good all the way to the end when I get to RegBack Dir hive files are there but they are all much larger than you state, there is also a file = all. When I go to copy in step 18 I get "all The file cannot be copied onto itself. 0 files copied. On rebooting I still can not repair nor boot Windows 7. Many thanks Alex.

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01-29-2011

#7

## Dzomlija

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“ Quote: Originally Posted by Baton Charge ♦

*Peter, looks good all the way to the end when I get to RegBack Dir hive files are there but they are all much larger than you state, there is also a file = all. When I go to copy in step 18 I get "all The file cannot be copied onto itself. 0 files copied. On rebooting I still can not repair nor boot Windows 7. Many thanks Alex.*

Did you include the double-dot destination that appears after the wilcards source specification?

To clarify:

`COPY [SPACE] * . * [SPACE] . . <ENTER>`

Forgetting to include the double-dot for the destination is the only things that can result in the "The file cannot be copied onto itself. 0 file(s) copied." error...

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01-29-2011

#8

## Baton Charge

Windows 7 and XP  
6 posts

Peter many thanks for your reply, I was worried this thread / tutorial might have archived.

Ah, I think it was the space that I missed, bother. Things however have deteriorated, one thread I followed mentioned the problem with the dual core creating a confusion when booting Windows 7, so I de-activated one of the partitions, not a good move, all I get now is the Windows Boot Manager crash screen telling me Windows failed to start. 1. Insert Windows disk and restart you pc. 2. Choose language. 3. Repair you pc. I thought blow it sounds like a re-install, it's a laptop so not much on it give it a go but no, even with the disc in it boots to the WBM, if I use f10 it starts the re-install but then dies. Any ideas on how to get back to command prompt? Alex.

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01-30-2011

#9

## Baton Charge

Windows 7 and XP  
6 posts

Using the DVD I managed to kick start the system after many attempts, got back to system recovery, tried the tutorial above, got all the way through this time, rebooted, did start up repair x 3 but still no luck, any further ideas? Alex.

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Page 1 of 11 **1** 2 3 > Last » ◆

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