

## Datashur rugged secure USB flash drive

The datAshur USB flash drive from iStorage, available in capacities from 4 to 32GB has been designed to provide military grade protection for one's data from both unauthorised access -- electronic and physical -- as well as loss due to the drive getting damaged.

The drive is 78 x 18 x 8 mm and has a large key ring attached. It is black in colour with a 1 to 0 keypad and LEDs on one side. Its overall weight, with the supplied extruded aluminium sleeve in place, is about 25g and is fractionally larger at 80 x 20 x 10.5mm. It uses hardware encryption for data security together with a physical design which is crush resistant and there is a rubber "O" ring seal on its body so that when the sleeve is in place the drive is protected from water or dust ingress. In fact, it meets the Ingress Protection IP57 standard which means that it provides protection from the amount of dust that would interfere with the operation of the unit as well as providing protection from immersion.

The drive incorporates its own rechargeable battery, is platform independent, and employs 100% AES 256-bit hardware encryption and has been designed to be tamper-proof so that if the incorrect PIN has been entered 10 times in succession, all data will be lost.

Plug it into a USB port in its "locked" state and it won't be "seen" by the PC. What one must do, before plugging it in, is to press the "key" button on the flash drive and then, within 10 seconds, input the PIN code, and then press the "key" button again. As long as the drive is inserted within a further 30 seconds, it will then be recognised. When the drive is removed, or the computer is rebooted or power is removed from the USB port, the drive reverts to its "safe" protected mode and would need to be unlocked again before it can be accessed.

When using for the first time, the internal rechargeable battery of the datAshur may need to be charged. This is done by inserting it into a powered USB port. Even though this is noted on the small Quick Start Guide, I rushed in before I realised that this was required. This guide provides basic information and explains how to unlock and use the drive as well as explaining how to change the PIN. Here, usefully, there is a cautionary note "For security, change the factory default PIN".

It is worth going to the User Guide which is provided on the stick itself. For example, it provides details of how an Admin PIN can be set up. This is useful in both the corporate environment and for home use to ensure that data is not lost in the event of the ordinary PIN number being forgotten as it allows access to the data. However, having used the Admin PIN, a new ordinary one must then be set. By the way, PINs must be between 7 and 15 digits long and that there are certain restrictions such as not using a string of sequential numbers.

It is very difficult to carry out meaningful speed tests as there are so many imponderables. However, despite it using hardware encryption it only took about an extra 10 per cent longer to copy a 1GB zip file to it as compared with an ordinary USB 2.0 flash drive. In reality, users will generally be working with smaller files so will probably not really notice the difference.

With prices starting at £39 + VAT for the 4GB version and rising to £99 for the 32GB unit some may consider that the datAshur is expensive. On the other hand, this cost could be insignificant in the context of financial and other personal information that it protects. However, for those for whom the encryption is enough and do not need IP57 and the commensurate degree of robustness that the datAshur provides, the company also offers lower priced datAshur Personal drives.