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*Self Destructing Systems and the Computer Consultant*  
*By Gary Oberst*

Many consultants put “time bombs” in their deliverables, protecting against non-payment. They are usually paid; they are occasionally sued. Many consultants avoid time bombs in their deliverables, protecting against liability. They are rarely sued; they are occasionally not paid.

If your contract is properly written – retaining ownership until you are paid- you should be able to put some self-destruct device in your deliverables safely. You must be careful, however, not to destroy your client’s data.

If you have merely modified your client’s existing system, you can only cause your modification to cease functioning; you cannot stop what your client has a right to use. This, of course, can be tricky and is not always possible.

Your attorney can explain your rights and liabilities in more detail.

Copyright 1991 by Gary Oberst. All rights reserved. Mr. Oberst is an attorney in Norwalk, Ct. concentrating in computer law. He is an associate member of ICCA F/W.