

TECH



TIPS

THE PCMCIA STANDARD: COMPACT, DURABLE & PORTABLE

The Personal Computer Memory Card International Association (PCMCIA) is a standards committee formed in 1989 by leading manufacturers of computer components. Initially intended as a standard for removable memory cards, the PCMCIA standard quickly expanded to include fax modems, LAN interfaces, cellular uplinks - and now, data acquisition cards and other interfaces.

The basic standard defines ultra-compact, business card-sized accessory cards, measuring 54mm wide by 85mm long. There are three different types of PCMCIA cards, defined by the maximum allowable thickness of the card:

- **Type I** cards can be a maximum of 3.3mm thick, and are usually memory expansion or solid-state disks.
- **Type II** cards, the most common, are just 5mm thick.
- **Type III** devices are the thickest, at a mere 10.5 (that's still less than half an inch).

Most portable PCs now come with two Type I or II slots, with the option of using either a single Type III card or two Type I/II cards.

PCMCIA peripherals are designed to be inserted and removed without turning off the PC first or rebooting afterward. This also applies to PCMCIA hard drives, which are typically designed to withstand 100G of shock while in use, and 500G or more at rest; (extreme resiliency is mandatory for any portable device expected to last).