

Monitoring Drive Health with DA Drive Analyzer

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1. COMPUTER STORAGE DRIVES HAVE A LIMITED LIFESPAN

Computer storage drives, both HDDs and SSDs, have a limited lifespan.

HDDs can develop problems with their disk surface when the read/write heads crash into their disks due to shock or when dust particulates scratch the surface of the disks after being batted around by the fast-rotating actuator arm.

When drives overheat or their mechanical components wear down, HDDs may also develop problems with their moving mechanical components, such as spindle motors.

Degraded flash memory cells, each capable of only a limited number of writes before they become unusable, can cause problems for SSDs.

Both kinds of drives utilize controllers that manage communication with the host as well as intricate circuitry. These are susceptible to breakage when power surges occur.

Data reveals that drives do indeed fail over time.

Recent data from Backblaze [1] revealed an annual failure rate of 1.47% for drives from datacenters typically housed in air-conditioned rooms. In 2023, ULINK's analysis revealed that drives from QNAP NAS units experienced a failure rate of 1.49%, resulting in their removal from the NAS due to RAID deterioration.

A study by Meta [2] found that the three drive models examined had higher failure rates as the drives aged.

2. THE DA DRIVE ANALYZER

The DA Drive Analyzer is a tool that you can use to anticipate when a drive is nearing the end of its life.

To deal with the reality of drive degradation and failure, both in controlled lab-like environments as well as home environments, ULINK Technology has developed a tool to predict drive failures and, more broadly, to monitor drive health metrics for signs of problems.

The DA Drive Analyzer, a commercially available tool, is compatible with more than 99% of commercial drives. DA Drive Analyzer has features to help both everyday users and advanced users keep track of their drives' health.

3. DA DRIVE ANALYZER FOR EVERYDAY USERS

Everyday users will benefit most from monitoring DA Drive Analyzer's main machine-learning-based (ML-based) Drive Health Predictions. This feature simply labels each drive's health status as either healthy, moderate risk, or severe risk.

By showing users the status of each drive, uncomplicated by additional details, users can decide in a simple way whether a drive is at risk of failure in the near future or not.

ULINK's main machine-learning algorithm generates the following statuses:

- A Healthy (or Normal) status drive is unlikely to fail in the near future.
- A Moderate-Risk (or Warning) status drive has a 70% chance of failing over the next 6 months.
- A Severe-Risk (or Critical) status drive has a 90% chance of failing within the next 6 months.

3.A. NAS App

If you are a NAS user, the quickest way to see the main ML-based Drive Health Predictions is to open up a DA Drive Analyzer NAS App, such as the DA Drive Analyzer App for QNAP NAS.

Installation

For detailed instructions on how to set up and license a DA Drive Analyzer on a QNAP NAS, see https://www.qnap.com/en-us/how-to/tutorial/article/how-to-set-up-ulink-da-drive-analyzer-on-your-qnap-nas.

For detailed instructions on how to set up and license DA Drive Analyzer on other supported NAS devices, see our Help Center at https://ulinktechda.zendesk.com/hc/en-us.

Open the Overview Page.

Once you've finished setting up the app and its licenses, please wait 24 hours for predictions to generate. The color-coded ML-based Drive Health Predictions are typically located on the app's Overview page.



Color-coded ML-based Drive Health Predictions

The example above shows that a single drive in our NAS has a Warning (At-Moderate-Risk) prediction. This lets us know that the drive may be at risk of failing in the near future. We can also see the offending drive's serial number, which is in slot 4 of our NAS.

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Drive information with their respective Serial Numbers.

With this information in hand, we have identified vulnerable drives and are in a better position to protect our data from loss.

4. DA DRIVE ANALYZER FOR ADVANCED USERS

Advanced users may wish to go beyond the basic drive health predictions provided within the DA Drive Analyzer.

4.A. DA Portal

Advanced users can explore features such as the Symptom Radar Chart, Threshold Alerts, and Fault Alerts. They can do so from within our online dashboard, DA Portal (accessible from the menu of DA Drive Analyzer's homepage at https://ulink-da.com).

Symptom Radar Chart

The Symptom Radar Chart is an ML-based feature within DA Portal that allows users to see which of five health metric groups are showing signs of deterioration. This allows you to quickly narrow down which symptoms may be causing drive deterioration—something the main ML-Based Drive Health Prediction mechanism cannot do at this time.

You can also think of the Symptom Radar Chart as an additional drive failure prediction mechanism, in which the lowest symptom score among any of the symptom groups represents the decile survival rate over the next year.

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To see this feature, log in to the DA Portal.

The DA Portal login page



To navigate to a specific drive, use the left navigation bar.

Navigate to the specific drive via the left navigation bar

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3.5" Slot 3 HDD	LS	Address Mark Not Found (A	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	Ŀ	Spin-Up Time	Ŀ.	3	56	54	0	0
3.5" Slot 4 HDD	LS	Command Aborted (ABRT)	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	Ŀ	Start/Stop Count	Ŀ	4	62	62	14	B9C
3.5" Slot 5 HDD	LS	Device Error Count	lifetime coun	24-hr change is gre	260	0	R	Reallocated Sectors	Ŀ.	5	13	13	A	4EA60
3.5" Slot 6 HDD	LS	Drive Not Ready Failure	daily count o	none	0	0	Ŀ	Seek Error Rate	Ŀ	7	5D	3C	2D	72019622
3.5" Slot 7 HDD	LS	Drive Read Operation Failure	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	R	Power-On Hours (PO	Ŀ	9	33	33	0	A96D
 3.5" Slot 8 HDD 	LS	Drive Write Operation Failure	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	Ŀ	Spin Retry Count	Ŀ	10	64	64	61	0
lucky.joseph (VIEWER)	m	Host Software Command Ti	daily count o	none	0	0	R	Power Cycle Count	Ŀ.	12	64	64	14	3C
小威 (VIEWER) 0		ID Not Found (IDNF) Count	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	Ŀ	End-to-End error	Ŀ	184	64	64	63	0
Ulink-TS-832X (NAS)	▦	IDENTIFY Failure	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	Ŀ	Reported Uncorrecta	Ŀ	187	1	1	0	104
		Interface CRC Error (ICRC)	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	R	Command Timeout	Ŀ	188	64	64	0	0
		Long Latency Read Count	daily count o	none	900	900	E.	High Fly Writes	Ŀ.	189	64	64	0	0
Copyright @ ULINK Technology, Inc. All Rights	s Reserve	Long Latency Write Count	daily count o	none	14438	14438	La	Temperature Differen	R	190	37	2F	28 Prive	3229002D cy Policy Terms of Use

Go to the Threshold-Based Alerts tab, and expand the Symptom Radar Chart.

Expand the Symptom Radar Chart via the Threshold-Based Alerts

Here, we see a drive with 3 out of 5 symptom groups experiencing deterioration (anything less than a score of 10 is deterioration). The SMART symptom group receives the lowest score of 4. This means that this drive has an approximate 40% chance of being usable a year from now.



Click on a symptom group to highlight it's respective health metrics.

Clicking on a symptom group highlights health metrics related to that group, as we can see by clicking on the Drive-Detected Issues group below. A quick glance tells us that within the Drive-Detected Issues group, several health metrics are showing elevated values, such as the number of reallocated logical sectors, device error count, and ASR events.

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• 3.5" Slot 5 HDD	LS	Number of Hardware Resets	lifetime coun	none	403	0	Ľ								
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3.5" Slot 8 HDD	LS	Number of Mechanical Start	lifetime coun	24-hr change is gre	0	0	Ŀ	Raw Read Data Rate		1	4D	31		32A0460	
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小威 (VIEWER) 0		Number of Reported Uncorr	running total	24-hr change is gre	16	0	Ŀ	Start/Stop Count		4	62	62	14	B9C	
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Health metrics show elevated values.

Each of the elevated symptoms potentially tells us something about the problems that this drive is experiencing. For example, the increased number of high-priority unload events (5th symptom from the top) indicates that the drive may have experienced shock or power supply issues in the past that necessitated emergency retraction of the read/write head.

Threshold Alerts

Threshold Alerts are a feature of the DA Drive Analyzer, which is similar to the Symptom Radar Chart in that it can help you pinpoint the cause of drive problems. Unlike the Symptom Radar Chart, it does not rely on ML. Instead, ULINK triggers this alert system whenever certain important symptoms exceed a predefined threshold. The easiest way to see Threshold Alerts in the DA Portal is by clicking on Alerts in the DA Portal.



Click on Alerts in the DA Portal's top navigation to view Threshold Alerts.

Drive Analyzer Powered by ULINK Technology			⑦ Help	ậ Alerts	🚺 Joseph	More ~
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Filter Systems	Name 💿	Location I		Date/	Time 🛿 🕕	
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Al Alert	[Threshold-Based Alert] Number of Reallocation Logical Sectors fell outside of its normal	QNAS-871T-JC : NAS Enclosure : 3.5" Slot 4-ZA1CWEPD		03/25	/2024 08:07 AM	
Threshold-Based Alert	[Threshold-Based Alert] Temperature Difference from 100 fell outside of its normal range.	QNAP667A : NAS Enclosure : 3.5" Slot 4-ZA1F7TEN		03/24	/2024 10:57 AM	
SELECT ALL ALERTS	[Threshold-Based Alert] Temperature Difference from 100 fell outside of its normal range.	QNAP667A : NAS Enclosure : 3.5" Slot 3-ZA1F874G		03/24	/2024 10:56 AM	
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	[Threshold-Based Alert] Number of Reallocation Logical Sectors fell outside of its normal	QNAS-871T-JC : NAS Enclosure : 3.5" Slot 4-ZA1CWEPD		03/17	/2024 09:16 AM	
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	[Threshold-Based Alert] Number of Reallocation Logical Sectors fell outside of its normal	QNAS-871T-JC : NAS Enclosure : 3.5* Slot 4-ZA1CWEPD		03/15	/2024 09:16 AM	
	Showing 1-15 of 155	« <mark>1</mark> 2 3 4 5 11 »				

Then select Threshold-Based Alerts on the filter and hit Submit.

Select Threshold-Based Alerts on the filter, and hit Submit.

Threshold Alerts will appear on the table to the right. Click on the slot of any Threshold Alert to go to the drive that generated the Threshold Alert.

Drive Analyzer	Powered by ULINK Technolog	я	⑦ Help	More ~
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		Showing 1-15 of 155 « 1 2 3 4 5 11 »		
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Click on the Slot of the specific Threshold Alert.

Once you are at the drive level, click on the Threshold-Based Alerts tab. The top left will display recent dates in the form of orange dots where threshold alerts have occurred.

Drive Analyzer Powered by ULINK Technolog	9Y										⑦ Help	🗘 Alert	ts <u>N</u> Josept	n More ∽
All Systems (6)		QNAS-871T-JC (NAS): NAS EN	CLOSURE:	ALPR	EDICTIONS	OPERATING S	UMMARY	THRESHOLD-BASED ALERTS)			DRIVE DA	TA LAST RECEIVE	D: 03/27/2024 🕄
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		Command Aborted (ABRT)	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	L?	Start/Stop Count	La.	4	62	62	14	B9C
		Device Error Count	lifetime coun	24-hr change is gre	260	0	L2	Reallocated Sectors	12	5	12	12	А	4EBB8
		Drive Not Ready Failure	daily count o	none	0	0	L2	Seek Error Rate	L ^a	7	5D	зc	2D	728202B1
		Drive Read Operation Failure	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	12	Power-On Hours (PO	L2	9	33	33	0	A985
		Drive Write Operation Failure	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	Ľ	Spin Retry Count	La.	10	64	64	61	0
		Host Software Command Ti	daily count o	none	0	0	L2	Power Cycle Count	L ^a	12	64	64	14	зc
		ID Not Found (IDNF) Count	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	6	End-to-End error	La.	184	64	64	63	0
		IDENTIFY Failure	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	L2	Reported Uncorrecta	L2	187	1	1	0	104
		Interface CRC Error (ICRC)	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	12	Command Timeout	L ^a	188	64	64	0	0
		Long Latency Read Count	daily count o	none	855	855	L2	High Fly Writes	L2	189	64	64	0	0
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Conversionst @ LILINK Technology Inc. All Dishte De		4											Driver	w Boliew I Terms of Line

Threshold alerts for recent dates are shown on the top left as orange dots.

An orange trend symbol will indicate individual threshold alerts at the bottom left or bottom right.

Drive Analyzer Powered by ULINK Technol	ogy										⑦ Help	🗘 Aleri	s <u>N</u> Josep	h More ~
All Systems (6)		QNAS-871T-JC (NAS): NAS EN	CLOSURE:	ALPR	EDICTIONS	OPERATING S	UMMARY	THRESHOLD-BASED ALERTS				DRIVE DA	TA LAST RECEIV	ED: 03/27/2024 🕄
Joseph (MAIN) 💿		THRESHOLD-BASED ALERT SU	MMARY (7) 💿				+	SYMPTOM RADAR CHAR	т 📵					+
Chen-NAS-TS251 (NAS)	⊞							PATENT PENDING						
- NAS313A1E (NAS)	⊞	• •	•	• •		•	•				\land			
NAS669246 (NAS)	▥	M	Mar. 00											
QNAS-871T-JC (NAS)	⊞	Mar 21 Mar 22	Mar 23	Mar 24 Mar 23	D N	tar 26 Ma	ar 27							
lucky.joseph (VIEWER) 0		OTHER DRIVE STATS						SATA SMART STATS						
QNAP667A (NAS)	⊞	Stat Name‡	Stat Type I	Alert Criteria 1	Latest Value 1	24-hr change I	7-Day Trend	SMART ATTRIBUTES [0	I	SMART ID (DEC) [Normalized (HEX)	Worst (HEX)]	Threshold (HEX)	Raw Values (HEX)
Ulink-TS-832X (NAS)	⊞	Number of Reallocation Logi	lifetime coun	24-hr change is gre	60344	344	Ŀ2	Raw Read Data Rate	L2	1	53	31	2C	B781D16
		Address Mark Not Found (A	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	Ŀ	Spin-Up Time	2	3	56	54	0	0
		Command Aborted (ABRT)	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	Le.	Start/Stop Count	Lª	4	62	62	14	B9C
		Device Error Count	lifetime coun	24-hr change is gre	260	0	L2	Reallocated Sectors	2	5	12	12	А	4EBB8
		Drive Not Ready Failure	daily count o	none	0	0	L2	Seek Error Rate	L.	7	5D	зc	2D	728202B1
		Drive Read Operation Failure	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	L2	Power-On Hours (PO	L2	9	33	33	0	A985
		Drive Write Operation Failure	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	L2	Spin Retry Count	2	10	64	64	61	0
		Host Software Command Ti	daily count o	none	0	0	L2	Power Cycle Count	L2	12	64	64	14	зc
		ID Not Found (IDNF) Count	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	Ľ	End-to-End error	2	184	64	64	63	0
		IDENTIFY Failure	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	6	Reported Uncorrecta	2	187	1	1	0	104
		Interface CRC Error (ICRC)	daily count o	Value is greater than	0	0	12	Command Timeout		188	64	64	0	0
		Long Latency Read Count	daily count o	none	855	855	L2	High Fly Writes	2	189	64	64	0	0
		Long Latency Write Count	daily count o	none	13142	13142	12	Temperature Differen	L2	190	37	2F	28	3229002D
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Individual threshold alert on the bottom right with an orange trend symbol.

In the example drive above, the health metric, the number of reallocated logical sectors, changed in the last 24 hours, which triggered a Threshold Alert. Clicking on the trend symbol allows us to view this metric over the last 7 days, revealing a recent elevation that suggests damage to the disk's surface.



Clicking on the trend symbol shows the metric of the last 7 days.

4.B. DA Monitor

There may be times when an advanced user, such as an IT manager, needs to monitor the health of drives for several people, each of whom has one or more computer or NAS systems monitored by a DA Drive Analyzer. The fastest way to do this is to use DA Monitor, which allows for quick and centralized drive monitoring.

DA Monitor is a desktop application that lets you add DA Drive Analyzer users and then view the number of at-risk drives for each user at a glance. It runs on Windows and Mac.

You can download DA Monitor from https://ulink-da.com/da_monitor/.

Once you have installed the application, you can create your first account by clicking Add Account. Follow the instructions and enter the account name and password for the user you are trying to add.



Add your first account by clicking on Add Account

To add additional user accounts, click on the Add Account button, which looks like a user profile.



Click on the Add Account button to add additional user accounts.

If a user has any drives predicted to fail soon by DA Drive Analyzer, you will see a non-zero number next to the red (Severe Risk) or yellow (Moderate Risk) icons. In the aforementioned example, a "3" appears next to the yellow

Moderate Risk icon, indicating that Joseph, the user, has three drives on the verge of failure.

To check the location of these 3 drives in the DA Portal, click on the logo on the top left corner of the user's card, which will take us to the DA Portal.



Click on the logo on the top left corner of the user's card to check the location of the drives.

Once we are in DA Portal, we can click on the yellow MODERATE RISK OF FAILURE (or the red SEVERE RISK OF FAILURE if DA Portal showed any red Severe Risk drives), which will take us to a table containing the three drives we saw in DA Monitor.



A table containing the three drives we saw in DA Monitor.

In this table, we can see the computer or NAS system, drive enclosure, and slot number of the three yellow Moderate-Risk drives, which let's locate the physical drives.

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Getting Started						Firefox account
Drive Analyzer Powered by ULINK Technology					⑦ Help	🗘 Alerts 🕠 Joseph 🛛 More 🗸
← Dashboard	AI PREDICTION: Moderate Drives	; (3)				
Drives	Account	System I	Туре I	Enclosure		Slot
All Licensed Drives	Joseph	Chen-NAS-TS251	NAS	NAS Enclosure		3.5" Slot 1
Severe Risk Of Failure	Joseph	NAS313A1E	NAS	NAS Enclosure		Slot 3
Healthy	Joseph	QNAS-871T-JC	NAS	NAS Enclosure		3.5" Slot 4
Pending						
Al Prediction Unsupported						

Clicking on the slot number of any of these drives to view that drive's page.

Clicking on the slot number of any of these drives will take us to that drive's page, where we can see recent health trends for that drive as well as its serial number.



The Drive's page with its health trends and its serial number.

5. WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WHEN A DRIVE IS AT RISK?

What should you do if you see a drive that has been predicted Moderate Risk or Severe Risk by the DA Drive Analyzer?

To protect your data, we recommend either backing up that drive immediately and frequently going forward or replacing it. Two levels of risk, Severe and Moderate, are provided by the DA Drive Analyzer so that the user can better weigh how to act based on their risk tolerance, budget, and SLAs in the case of businesses.

Once at-risk drives have been identified, advanced users can additionally explore the cause of drive deterioration with the Symptom Radar Chart, or Threshold Alerts.

Perhaps the drive enclosure temperature is excessive. Or perhaps a loose cable is causing problems. With these features, the DA Analyzer can help you pinpoint possible causes of drive failures.

References

- 1. https://www.backblaze.com/blog/backblaze-drive-stats-for-q3-2023/
- Miller, Z., Medaiyese, O., Ravi, M., Beatty, A., & Lin, F. (2023, June). Hard Disk Drive Failure Analysis and Prediction: An Industry View. In 2023, the 53rd Annual IEEE/IFIP International Conference on Dependable Systems and Networks—Supplemental Volume (DSN-S) (pp. 21–27) IEEE.



