RT130 ALERT - Issue when using two 4GB CF cards

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PASSCAL recently received reports of RT130’s failing when using two RefTek 4G CF cards at moderately low temperatures during an Antarctic experiment. We have duplicated the failure in our lab and in our testing the failure was associated with a specific version of RefTek well board (RT526D). Although we have not had failures in our testing with earlier or later versions of the board, our sample set is small and we cannot rule out problems with these boards when using two 4G CF cards. We have communicated with RefTek about the issue and at this time they are in agreement with these findings.

In our testing we have determined that cold RT130s will not boot with two 4GB cards installed and that units started warm will fail when the temperature dips below a threshold (+14 to +7C). The mode of failure is that units can be hung in a cycle of rebooting, with LCD screen repeatedly cycling through normal messages along with "DISK IN USE", or if the temperature is too low the LCD screen will just go gray and the unit will not boot up. The units do recover on their own when the DAS internal temperature warms back up to the failing temperature.

Our recommendation, at this time, if you have units in-field with two 4GB CF cards is to service these sites and replace the two 4GB cards. Our testing to date suggests that reconfiguring the site with one 2GB and one 4GB CF card, two 2GB CF cards, or a single slot filled are all stable configurations. Please don’t hesitate to passcal [at] passcal [dot] nmt [dot] edu (contact us).

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