



[INSIDE INDUSTRY]

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Housing your critical subsets after a hurricane

Three hurricanes and about 150 Pop-Tarts later, those of us on the Texas Gulf Coast have learned a few things about preparing for, working through and recovering from major damage caused by extreme weather.

Our experience has evolved into expertise. I wouldn't call it "expertise" unless our gained knowledge had been tested, and it was, just this past September during Hurricane Ike. Not only did our organization, Application Factory Inc., experience no lost business time but we were able to host people and systems for a major petrochemical company in the Fortune 10.

The key to disaster preparedness is identifying critical subsets — people, systems, equipment and vehicles — and determining how to maintain these subsets through the ordeal.

Most industries do identify vital needs to the operation of their businesses in the case of a disaster, however, they fail to consider where to house decision makers, e-mail systems and database servers, phones, hardware and company cars if their buildings are destroyed, as they were in Hurricane Ike. No doubt, it's hard

to imagine the complete loss of a facility, but Ike devastated Chemical Row in Southeast Texas.

Therefore the first question emergency preparedness decision makers should ask themselves is, "Where are we going to do business if our facility takes a big hit?"

There are three options to consider: a fortified on-site building or room, a local remote facility that is fortified and equipped for business, or a remote facility located in another part of the country.

Obviously, the easiest and possibly most economic option is the fortified on-site building or room. This alternative is feasible if your facility is elevated well beyond potential water surge heights, there are no trees or telephone poles on site that could fall, and the structure of your building is solid. For example, if your IT information systems are located in a temporary building in the parking lot of your organization, maintaining systems in this type of facility during and after a major hurricane is not practical.

Application Factory was successful in staying on site and operational during and after the storm only because we had a

room for our technology with fortified walls, reinforced with cinderblocks. After Hurricane Rita we installed a windstorm roof and were confident in our facilities. If a structure or room cannot be erected or an existing room strengthened, consider a remote location for your critical subsets.

We served as a remote facility for one of our clients during Hurricane Ike. Our high elevation and solid structure contributed to our capabilities to house this major petro player, but because we also had taken the necessary steps to ensure our technology would never be interrupted we were able to serve an important client in a time of dire need.

In advance of hurricane season we secured additional phones, laptops, a large generator, a satellite system, first aid kit, water, food, a barbecue pit and readily available vehicles. Even during the strongest winds, our facility was operational and once the winds died down to 50 mph, we began moving our client's first responders, decision makers and top executives to our facility.

If a local site is not a possibility consider renting a regional location for technology

only. Another client, a large regional building supply company, has replicated their technology, and it is housed at a remote facility in central Texas. We assisted them in creating a second main frame, windows servers, database, Web site and all other critical data for storage away from the coast. This replication architecture runs constantly. When information is edited, changed, etc. at the home site, it is simultaneously updated remotely and vice versa. When Hurricane Gustav threatened our area, the company pushed all operations to the remote site and closed its Beaumont, Texas, headquarters. They didn't bring the data back to Beaumont until three weeks after Hurricane Ike. This company didn't lose a day of business.

Depending on the consequences of business downtime and the critical nature of your business, your organization may want to consider a co-location, an ultra secure, fortified site with redundant power. Such sites like Switchnap in Las Vegas offer rentable space where servers, data, critical hardware and software can be housed.

For more information, call (800) 839-1645 or visit www.applicationfactory.com. □

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