Hurricane Season is Here - Are Your DR Plans in Place?

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Management Summary

The north Atlantic hurricane season in 2005 contained an unprecedented 28 storms. Fifteen of those storms were hurricanes and seven of these were 'major' hurricanes with category 3 or higher classifications. Four of those major hurricanes hit landfall in the United States. An average hurricane season consists of about 11 storms, six storms become hurricanes and two become major hurricanes. The 2005 hurricane season was a season that few people in the Southeast United States will quickly forget. Now we are beginning a new hurricane season and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), while not predicting another extreme season, is warning us not to be complacent about this year's hurricane season. NOAA is predicting that there will higher than normal storm activity - 13 to 16 storms, 8 to 10 will become hurricanes, and 4 to 6 will become major hurricanes. The message is clear – **this year we need to be prepared for hurricane season, again.**

The 2005 hurricane season left thousands homeless; thousands of home and businesses were destroyed. Businesses that were not damaged were without power for hours, days, or weeks. *Can your business survive a direct hurricane hit? Can you afford to be without power, and have no IT processing for days or weeks?* Many surveys have shown that half of the businesses that lose data or cannot operate for days close their doors within months or years after the disaster. Some businesses never reopen after a disaster. However, the news is not all grim. **Businesses that have an effective disaster recovery plan in place will survive a disaster.**

We all understand the importance of disaster recovery. Yet, many small-to-mid-size businesses do not have DR plans in place today. There are many reasons given for this. Some companies feel that:

- *Disaster recovery solutions are expensive*. In the past, many DR solutions were designed for large enterprise customers (with large price tags). However, there are affordable solutions available today.
- *A disaster will not happen to my company*. Don't feel that you are safe if you are not located in a hurricane or flood zone. In August 2003, parts of Canada and the Northeast suffered through the largest power blackout in North American history affecting over 50 million people and thousands of businesses. This was not caused by weather conditions, but by the failure in a power station in Ohio.
- *Disaster recovery is difficult to implement.* We don't have the expertise or time. Disaster recovery can be difficult to implement from scratch. However, there are proven solutions available today that are easy to implement.

Building a DR Solution

There are several key ingredients to an effective disaster recovery solution. First, a reliable copy of the data must be created which can be used to restore when the original data is corrupted, lost, or accidentally deleted. Next, this copy of the data must be sent to a secure location and be readily available when a disaster strikes. Procedures must be documented to ensure that IT personnel know how to restore the data. Finally, these procedures must be tested to prove that they do, in fact, work.

The difficulty for many small-to-mid-size businesses is that they cannot afford to dedicate IT personnel and resources to designing this DR solution. There are many design questions to be answered.

1. *Where should the copies be stored?* In the trunk of someone's car? This is not a good idea particularly on a very hot day.
2. *Should the tapes be shipped to an offsite location such as Iron Mountain? Should these tapes be encrypted?*
3. *Should the data be remotely replicated to a second location? Where should this second location be?* Replicating to a second location within a campus environment does little to protect from disasters that affect several blocks or miles. *What size network is required to support this configuration? How much will it cost to set up a second location, if one is not available?*

Each choice has different costs and different risks. Each choice must be designed and maintained by IT. For many companies that are required to do more with less, DR planning and implementation takes a back seat to other day-to-day activities.

A Partnership for DR

AmeriVault and XOsoft have teamed up to allow businesses to implement a disaster recovery solution quickly. The program, called *Fast Track*, is initially targeted to companies in hurricane prone areas. But the program is equally suited for any company that wants to be prepared for a disaster without designing and maintaining their own infrastructure.

Fast Track

Fast Track is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Three different solutions offer different levels of protection. In women's clothes, one size fits all doesn't really fit *any* woman that well. One-size-fits-all data protection solutions don't really fit any company's needs that well either.

ServerVault

ServerVault provides online scheduled backup copies to a secure location. This is the lowest cost option and allows businesses to get backup copies of data stored away from disaster prone areas. Businesses can restore data online or can have larger data volumes shipped to them on portable disk devices through a recovery service called *MobileVault*.

RepliVault CDP

While ServerVault provides scheduled backups, *RepliVault CDP* provides continuous backups using XOsoft's *WANSync* software. Since *RepliVault CDP* uses Continuous Data Protection (CDP) technology, you can restore data from any previous point in time.[1]

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[1] See **The Clipper Group Explorer** dated, May 23, 2006, entitled *Continuous Data Protection - Now Ready for Prime Time*, and available at http://www.clipper.com/research/TCG2006039.pdf.

> ### About AmeriVault and XOsoft
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> AmeriVault, established in 1998, was one of the first companies to supply disk-to-disk backup solutions for their customers. Today, AmeriVault provides managed data protection and recovery services for hundreds of companies to several secure locations throughout the United States.
>
> XOsoft was founded one year later and has developed continuous availability software supporting many popular applications.
>
> The partnership of these two companies provides businesses with an easy to use managed data protection and high availability solution.

RepliVault HA

RepliVault HA provides automatic failover for businesses with high-availability needs. With this solution, AmeriVault can host the businesses' hardware in dedicated cabinets. XOsoft's *WANsyncHA* software is used to enable manual or automatic failover of critical applications.

Assured Recovery

Assured Recovery is available for businesses that are using either *RepliVault CDP* or *RepliVault HA*. With the *Assured Recovery* module, replication spools briefly to allow an automated integrity DR test that then sends confirming notifications to pertinent administrators.

Is It Expensive?

Each solution is priced according to the level of protection offered. For example, *ServerVault* costs about $13 to $20 per gigabyte (GB) of protected data per month. *RepliVault CDP*, which includes hardware, two software licenses, and space in a Tier-1 data center, costs about $1,350 a month to protect up to 150 GB of data. Is it expensive? Hardly. How costly would it be if your business had to close its doors after a disaster?

Conclusion

We all know the importance of being prepared for disasters. But, disaster recovery planning for a small-to-mid-size business can be difficult to achieve. Some companies don't know the first steps to take – the result is that they do nothing. Doing nothing can have disastrous consequences.

The Fast Track solution offered by AmeriVault and XOsoft eliminates the confusion about the first steps to take. The combination of their well-tested software and managed services provides businesses with several different levels of protection. It is easy to implement, easy to use, and affordable. Now, when disaster strikes, businesses will be able to restore their data and continue operations. That ability to recover and continue operations makes all the difference between a company that continues to thrive and a company that is forced to close its doors.

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About the Author

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