

Disaster Preparedness and Off-Site Backup

Most businesses already keep critical business data off-site to reduce risk when disaster strikes. These measures may range from simply storing backup tapes at an off-site location, to a managed service relationship with a third party off-site backup provider. The off-site component of your disaster preparedness planning becomes more important daily as Information Technology grows increasingly critical to almost every business process. It is important to evaluate your off-site strategy in light of risk, current capabilities, and need. Following are a few questions to help guide your analysis:

- If using tape, is my off-site rotation schedule working? Have I randomly tested some of the off-site data to make sure it is serviceable and up to the task?
- Reconstructing servers' capabilities so that backed up data can be restored can be a time consuming and expensive undertaking if fire strikes my server room. Have I planned adequately for restoring my servers to full functionality? Do my backups allow for a bare metal restore?
- If partnering with an off-site backup provider, it is important to address the following;
 - Because disasters can happen at the most inconvenient time: Is live help available 24X7?
 - Have I tested a restore with my off-site backup partner? Has this test been during off hours or on weekends?
 - Does my off-site backup provider offer the bare metal restore capability to effectively bring a server and data back on-line quickly?
 - Does my off-site backup partner provide sufficient data protection by maintaining redundant data centers separated by an acceptable distance that will minimize the impact of a large scale event such as an earthquake?
- Does your disaster preparedness strategy take into a complete range of risk? Can your plan properly address everything from one server being taken out by a water leak, to a 5-alarm fire destroying your complete facility?

IT disaster preparedness planning is a daunting challenge for any business. A comprehensive offsite data storage component is a critical component of your overall strategy and should be regularly tested, and reviewed.

Submitted by Randy Thomas, Director of Business Development for Golden West Technologies