

# **Disaster and the Data Center - IO**



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## Disaster and the Data Center

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How would you cope if your data center was severely damaged or even obliterated by a disaster? It's unsettling to think about the many threats that could potentially wipe out your organization's IT resources. Yet right now, as you're reading this article, there are data centers struggling to recover from the devastation caused by fires, floods, explosions, wind, earthquakes and a variety of other natural and man-made threats. The idea that your data center could one day find itself in the same position is hardly inconceivable.

The stakes are extraordinary high. According to global insurance provider Axa, 80 percent of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) affected by a major incident either never re-open or close within 18 months. Larger firms, meanwhile, stand to suffer serious, perhaps permanent, losses in revenue, customers and reputation. Fortunately, simply by planning ahead, you can ensure that your company's IT systems will be able to stay online and play an active role in helping your business regroup and rebuild after a calamity. Here's how to get started:

**Develop a Data Center Recovery Plan.** Most enterprises already have an organization-wide disaster recovery/business continuity plan. Yet such documents often fail to adequately describe the data center's role in supporting business operations before, during and after a crisis. That's a major oversight, and the reason why data centers need their own disaster recovery/business continuity blueprint. The document should include information on risk analysis, budgeting, testing, deployment and other crucial issues.

**Create a Backup Facility.** Unless your enterprise's data center is already located at an efficient, secure and reliable off-site facility, it's probably vulnerable to the same perils that threaten to damage or destroy your headquarters. Most major businesses answer this challenge by creating a backup data center that's prepared to go into action instantly on a fail-over basis. The secondary site is usually located some distance away—typically in

another county or state—from the primary facility.

**Consolidate Your Data Center.** Many enterprises balk at the prospect of creating a backup data center, mostly due to the cost and trouble of duplicating key systems and synchronizing data. Many businesses can successfully address this problem by moving their primary data center to an off-site facility and then centralizing IT operations there. If the organization selects a place that's virtually immune to major natural calamities (such locations really do exist within the U.S.), and that features advanced fire control, access control and other protective measures, it will have taken a major step toward ensuring its ability to survive a major crisis. The firm will also be able to take advantage of the cost and operational benefits that come with basing a data center in a facility that's been specifically designed to enhance IT operations and to protect systems and their users from mundane interruptions, such as blackouts and network failures, as well as once-in-a-lifetime disasters.

**Consider Virtualization.** Savvy businesses are turning to virtualization as a way of greatly reducing the cost of restoring IT activities in an emergency. With virtualization, it's possible to encapsulate an operating system, an application and its data into the equivalent of an application running on top of an operating system. The encapsulated application can then be easily transmitted to an off-site location—just as one would transmit a data file—and made available on a remote machine for employees to access. This capability can slash the length of downtime during a crisis from days to hours. If your organization has already adopted virtualization, it's ahead of the game in disaster recovery and other critical IT areas. If not, you now have another reason for jumping onto the virtualization bandwagon.

Tags: data center, Disaster Recovery, virtualization

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