



Will Your Data Survive the Storm?

October 26, 2005

72 hours. For our sales staff in Houston, that was the amount of time we had to prepare for a potentially destructive hurricane. If you have a plan in place, critical files and documents can be quickly safeguarded and your employees can go home to make plans to secure and evacuate. With no plan in place, important business documents and files may be lost or evacuation could be delayed. Is *your* business ready for an emergency or natural disaster?

Since we specialize in technology and software, this article will address the daily security of your business data. In the event of an emergency or disaster, a checklist of preparations for securing your data is also provided. This checklist is in no means exhaustive, but can be added to your business's handbook on security and disaster plans. Of course, the time to implement any preparations is **now!** Don't wait until a storm is approaching – by then, you will not have time to plan for safeguarding your business and property!

Computer data storage. The backbone of any lodging business is your property and guest database. Secure storage of your database in any event is vital to continuation of your business either in the event of a power outage or disaster. An absolutely reliable data storage system should include the following components:

- 2 locations of physical data storage
- automatic, daily scheduled backup
- systems in place to protect from viruses and hackers

Unless you have professional experience in backing up computer systems, I do not recommend you rely on your own CD or tape backup system for securing copies of guest data. Copying data to a CD-ROM or tape may seem simple, but the process often relies on several steps. One wrong move may result in erasing a backup or failing to copy all files. There are several criteria involved in a secure backup, such as sufficient tape or disc space, adequate time to copy files and non-interference with files being copied. I have spoken with too many distraught innkeepers who thought they backed up data properly, only to discover at a time they needed it that a mistake was made in the backup process. I highly recommend you depend on a professional system to provide secure data backups.

For innkeepers who use a web-based application, chances are your service *includes* daily, secure backups of all your guest and reservation data. Web-based applications are hosted at professional, secure data centers. Backups are made constantly, firewalls are in place, and the server is monitored 24/7 and immediately alerts technicians in the case of any computer failure. In the event you lose power or internet connection, you will have access to all of your data as soon as electricity and lines are restored, or you re-locate temporarily.

If you maintain your guest data on your own local computer, I recommend a remote data storage program. More than a year ago, I recommended Xdrive.com, which is still rated as easy-to-use for scheduling and backing up data. During a quick review on the web, I would also give www.ibackup.com a favorable review. Whatever remote backup system you select, in addition to cost and features, please ensure you have assurance of the following technology:

- SSL encryption
- User/password authentication
- Secure data center services: 24/7 monitoring, redundant routers and hardware

You can also request to review what is known as an "SLA" (Service Level Agreement) from your remote data backup provider. This agreement will usually outline your "guarantee" with this service, typically 99% up-time.

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Now don't delay, take steps today to ensure your business data is protected. As we come to the close of this year I hope we will all remain out of harm's way, but if disaster ever strikes, you'll be prepared.

Records Preservation			
DOCUMENTS	COPIES MADE	ORIGINALS RELOCATED	COMMENTS
Ownership documents (building title, company vehicles)			
Mortgage holder & account numbers			
Financial & banking information			
Insurance policies -Property -Flood -Vehicles -Income Loss -Requirements for claims			
Engineering plans & drawings			
Room rate list			
Guest database			
Supplier – Vendor database			
Employee files			
Backup computer files			
Original recipes			
Other			

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