

## Backups:

A business disaster... where do we go from here?

Insurance companies are becoming wise to the cost of business continuity. As a result, insurers are pushing that companies follow best practices for backing up data or face monetary penalties.

### What are my chances?

Worst case, your business has a fire, flood, or other natural disaster... what next? You call your insurance company to file a claim and start to rebuild your operations. But while you might be able to dry off that paper, your server is damaged beyond recovery. What next? All those emails, all those critical spreadsheets... The chances of survival are slim. The SBA (Small Business Administration) estimates between 25 to 40% of businesses do not reopen after a disaster.

### How legislation stacks up

Common law has been around for more than 200 years, but it is just as important now as it was then. A 1932 landmark case, T.J. Hooper v. Northern Barge Corp., determined that the sinking of two barges in a storm was due to negligence. It was ruled that the lack of radio receivers on the company's vessels was negligent as they would have been able to avoid the storm had they had receivers. The same parallel can be made today with our reliance on computers.

The IRS requires that businesses keep records dating back at least seven years, but can require up to 10 years if fraud is suspected. Fines can be leveraged against businesses that can not produce auditable materials regardless of a disaster.

### What are best practices for backup?

Best practices vary depending on your organization's size and how much data you have, but here are a few guidelines:

- You need to have at least two of whatever media you are using, be it disk or tape.
- Many smaller businesses under 30GB should be backing up everything every night. Larger data stores should have at minimally two master sets of a full backup and incremental changes throughout the week.
- Keeping backup media offsite is critical. If your building has a fire, it is no good that your backups are stored atop the server.
- Offsite storage is no longer a recommendation, but a necessity. The SBA recommends backup data is stored at an offsite location at least 50 miles away from the main site, but this is rarely possible for smaller organizations. Best practice for smaller companies is to require either the President, CEO, owner, or better yet, a third party take the media home every night bringing back only the media to be used that day.

### Transporting and storing tips

- Never leave media in your vehicle. Environmental factors as well as theft are serious contenders.
- Do not keep media stored in locations of extreme temperatures or humidity, as this can cause damage (i.e. car, garage, kitchen, basement).
- Always read the label on your media to ensure it is stored in the correct position. Some tapes can be damaged if they do not sit upright.
- Test your media at least once a year to ensure that backups are saving what you need to save and that it can be properly recovered.