



Hurricane Season is approaching! Officially, the season begins June 1<sup>st</sup> which is only a few short days away. Now is the perfect time to prepare yourself and your office to deal with one of Mother Nature's most fearsome natural disasters.

At IT Designs, we take the safety and security of your networks as our highest priority! If a hurricane should take aim at your office this year, we want you to be ready to protect your valuable hardware and data in order to ride out the storm with as little down-time as possible.

With that in mind, here are some simple steps you can take yourself to prepare for the worst that weather can throw at you:

- **Turn your desktop computers off at the end of the day.** There used to be a myth that turning computers on and off would damage the PC so people started leaving their computers on 24/7. However, there's very little truth to this myth; if you turn your computer on in the morning when you arrive at the office and turn it off when you leave, you aren't going to damage your PC. Computers have most of the same parts inside that a modern television has, but you don't leave your television on 24/7! There's also a financial incentive for turning your computer off: most standard PCs have power supplies in the 400-watt range, the equivalent of 4 100-watt light bulbs. If you are in the office 10 hours a day that still leaves 14 hours per day where you are chewing up electricity for a system that is idle. Multiply that by the total number of desktop PCs left on overnight and the amount of money saved by simply turning off your computers can run from hundreds to thousands of dollars per year! Turning off a computer helps prevent accidental lightning strikes, data loss due to improper shutdowns, helps the environment and saves you money. What could make more sense?
- **Connect PCs and monitors to a backup power supply with a good surge suppressor.** Florida is one of the major lightning capitals of the world and lightning is a computer killer. Your computer doesn't even need to take a direct hit from a lightning bolt; a power spike in the electrical lines from a hit even a few miles away can reduce a computer into a paperweight. Commercial backups and surge suppressors protect computers by placing a roadblock between the power grid and your computer. In the event of a power spike, special circuitry inside the suppressor absorbs the spike and keeps it from hitting your sensitive PC. In the event of a major power spike, the suppressor sacrifices itself and

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and absorbs the entire brunt of the surge. Sure, you may have to replace the battery backup and surge suppressor, but that's a lot cheaper than replacing a computer. The battery backup capability of the suppressor is a nice bonus; if power should fail during a storm, your computer will stay on long enough for you to save any work and turn the computer off gracefully. You'll never appreciate your battery backup more than the time it saves hours of work keeping your PC on while the rest of the electric grid has failed.

- **If a hurricane is expected to strike in the area of your office, move computers and electronic equipment up off of the floor.** Most of us make room for our computers by placing them on the floor under our desks. In the event of a hurricane, the torrential rains combined with strong winds can cause water leakage and flooding in normally water-tight buildings. If water should start to pool in the lower floors of your building, any computers remaining on the floor could become flooded. And, as everyone knows, water and electronics are a bad mixture! By moving your computers and electronic devices from the floor to the top of your desk before you evacuate due to the hurricane, you minimize the possibility that a small amount of flooding damages your company's computers. An even better idea is to place your computers on the desks and then cover them with a tarp or large plastic bag, like a garbage bag. That will protect your computers from flooding and water damage from above if a ceiling should start to leak.
- **Make multiple copies of important files and store them in separate locations.** As anyone who has used a computer for any length of time knows, your PC can fail even without a natural disaster. Knowing this, why would anyone keep that all-important, cannot-be-reproduced copy of the company's past ten years of financial data in one location? If the file is so important that you would be lost without it, make multiple copies and store them on more than one computer; generally, one copy on your local PC and a second copy on the company server would be a great place to start. Even better, implement a backup and recovery plan that allows you to store copies of files outside of the office.
- **Have a proven and tested disaster recovery plan.** Nothing is more disastrous to a business than a major loss of data. Even if you follow the recommendation above regarding keeping multiple copies in multiple



locations on your network, what happens in the worst-case scenario: a fire reduces the office to rubble? If your data disaster recovery plan stops at the walls of your office, what good is it if your office is lost? If you have good tape backups every night but the tapes are lost in a fire, your data will be gone forever. In order to have a comprehensive disaster recovery plan, your office must be ready for any such contingency. Data must be backed-up at your location, but backups also need to be archived in off-site locations in the case of damage to the office. This would require assigning someone the responsibility of taking a form of backup media home every evening; if the office were lost in a disaster, your data could still be recovered using the archive stored at the employee's home.

How important is a proven disaster recovery plan? Did you know that 43 percent of companies that experience a major loss of data *never reopen*? And that 51 percent close within two years of the loss? Are you willing to trust the fate of your company to something with the same odds as a coin toss?

IT Designs wants to be your trusted partner in the security and protection of your corporate data. With our latest product, the Restore-IT line of data backup and recovery, you can rest easy knowing that your critical corporate files are stored securely in multiple off-site facilities. Restore-IT allows us the ability to secure your files in locations outside the local area, meaning that even in the event of a major natural disaster, your data is still protected at sites hundreds of miles from the region. Even in the face of a complete and total loss of your corporate offices, IT Designs and our Restore-IT solution can have you back up and running in roughly one business day!

There's a lot to think about when you consider the ramifications of a natural disaster on your business if you have not taken the proper steps to protect yourself from the unknown. Unfortunately, too many businesses put off the decisions for disaster preparation only to wish they had not.

Let IT Designs take the worry off your shoulders. If you have any questions or would like more information on disaster preparations, please feel free to contact us.

Until then, stay safe, stay alert... and always be prepared for the unexpected.

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