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HOW PUBLIC SECTOR DOES DISASTER RECOVERY

Reliable disaster recovery is essential for every organization, but...

What actually precipitates an organization's decision to upgrade its DR capabilities?

How do new DR initiatives get funded in the public sector?

What benefits does the right DR solution provide—even if there is no disaster?

Eugene Rudy knew the City of St. Marys needed to upgrade its backup systems.

But how exactly would he do it – and who would help?

Eugene Rudy is more than just the Director of IT for the City of St. Marys—a vibrant community of 17,000+ citizens on Georgia's southern coast, just over the border from Jacksonville. Rudy is executive director of the Georgia chapter of GMIS, the country's largest association of public-sector IT professionals, and has served in various capacities with GMIS International. So he understands as well as anyone, the difference between adequate and inadequate DR (disaster recovery) preparedness.

And the City's DR at the start of our story was definitely inadequate. The City was using a combination of tape and external hard drives to back up its various systems. Part of this was due to the kind of unsystematic approach to backup that often characterizes municipal IT organizations. Some was due to the fact that its software vendors—including the developer of its core ERP system—had recommended tape at the time of deployment.

But regardless of how the City's backups ended up how they were, it was not protected against a real disaster. Fragmented, unreliable backup meant that the City's 4+TB of data—covering everything from liquor licenses to building permits—was at risk. If a disaster struck the seaside community, it wouldn't be able to serve its citizens or even pay its employees. Lack of a sufficiently standardized and automated approach to backup also meant the City was spending more than it needed to on data protection.

"We needed more streamlined backup operations, we needed the safety of cloud-based storage, and we needed full confidence in our ability to reconstitute our critical systems no matter what the circumstances," declares Rudy. "The only question was how to best fulfill those needs."

> **" Hybrid backup with a Time-Based Cloud Retention fee structure enables us to do the best job of ensuring the continuity of our IT operations while keeping our monthly costs low and predictable. "**
>
> –Eugene Rudy
> City of St. Marys

Five-Factor Authentication

As it turned out, Rudy was able to dramatically improve the City's disaster preparedness using Datto SIRIS solutions. Five factors contributed directly to his ability to do so:

- **Disaster awareness.** Situated as it is on the Georgia coast, the City of St. Marys is plainly exposed to significant weather. The most recent such event was 2012's Tropical Storm Beryl, the strongest off-season cyclone ever to make landfall in the U.S. That "wake-up call" heightened awareness of the City's vulnerability among IT and non-IT people alike.

- **The right champion.** As Director of IT, Rudy was obviously the right person to champion an upgrade of the City's backup systems. But his championing of that initiative was enhanced by both the passion he put behind his efforts and the credibility he built with government leaders through his participation in GMIS and other professional enrichment programs such as Lean Six Sigma accreditation.

- **Strong executive support.** Because Rudy was able to make a strong, credible case for investment in improved business continuity—a case that encompassed both the operational necessities and the long-term economic advantages associated with DR modernization, he was able to get full buy-in from the mayor and the entire city council.

- **The right funding vehicle.** The State of Georgia has a unique fiscal program known as the special-purpose local-option sales tax (SPLOST). This program provided the City of St. Marys with the funds it needed outside of its existing IT budget to finance a modernized DR system.

- **A smart, aggressive MSP**. Into this ripe mix of need and readiness to act stepped Thinkgard—a Pelham, AL-based MSP and Datto partner specializing in business continuity. Thinkgard took the social media-savvy step of contacting Rudy via LinkedIn to initiate a conversation about their Datto-based service offering. That conversation eventually resulted in a December 2014 municipal government resolution to engage with Thinkgard.

What the City Gained

The engagement with Thinkgard provided the City of St. Marys with multiple benefits. For one thing, all of its systems and data—both virtual and physical—are being reliably backed up without requiring a lot of manual work from its few in-house IT employees. For another, those backups are available both locally and in the cloud. That hybrid model is a big plus to Rudy and his team. "Local backup protects even if you lose your Internet connection, and cloud backup protects you even if your local data center is wiped out," explains Rudy. "So the combination is essential for full assurance of business continuity."

Thinkgard's Datto-enabled DR-as-a-service offering also protects the City financially through a fixed monthly Time-Based Cloud Retention fee, rather than conventional volume-based pricing. "We can't really control how quickly our data is growing, so a service that charged us by the GB would leave us exposed to higher costs than we could afford," Rudy says. "Thinkgard's model, on the other hand, keeps our costs low and predictable."

Ultimately, however, it is the City's citizens and businesses that will benefit if and when a disaster strikes—whether that disaster is another major cyclone or merely a crashed server. "People don't realize how much they depend on their municipal government until something goes wrong," notes Rudy. "With Datto and Thinkgard, we have dramatically and cost-effectively reduced the risk of that happening."

About Datto

Datto is an innovative provider of comprehensive backup, recovery and business continuity solutions used by thousands of managed service providers worldwide. Datto's 140+ PB purpose-built cloud and family of software and hardware devices provide Total Data Protection everywhere business data lives. Whether your data is on-prem in a physical or virtual server, or in the cloud via SaaS applications, only Datto offers end-to-end recoverability and single-vendor accountability.

Datto's innovative technologies include Instant Virtualization, Screenshot Backup Verification™, Inverse Chain Technology™, Backup Insights™, and end-to-end encryption. All Datto solutions are supported by 24/7/365 in-house technical support and selected products offer time-based cloud data retention, for predictable billing and budget management. The Datto product line consists of the Datto SIRIS Family, Datto ALTO Family, Datto Backupify Family, Datto DNA Router, and Datto NAS. Founded in 2007 by Austin McChord, Datto is privately held and profitable. In 2013, General Catalyst Partners invested $25M in growth capital, and in 2015 McChord was named to the Forbes "30 under 30" ranking of top young entrepreneurs. To learn more, visit www.datto.com.

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