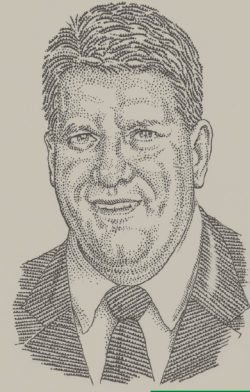


# Blown Away

Natural disasters can take out an organization's IT infrastructure in the blink of an eye. Without a business continuance plan that addresses prevention and recovery, an organization can come to a grinding halt with devastating consequences.



Jeff Brewer is a Business Vitals CIO consultant who helps organizations with issues that threaten information security and business survival.

## Why are natural disasters a threat to IT?

Natural disasters such as floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, hurricanes, ice storms, and fire can shutdown a business for hours, days or even weeks due to a power loss or destruction of the business itself. Regardless of location, no business is safe from natural disasters.

## How real is the threat?

According to the SANS Institute, 72 percent of U.S. companies that experience business interruptions attribute them to power outages. I know of a multi-state car dealership that experienced an ice storm-related power outage. The business was paralyzed because the IT system stayed down until power was restored four days later.

## What are some other natural disasters?

Water from storms and flooding poses a real threat to mission-critical data centers. In the late 1990s, Hurricane Hugo pounded cities along the South Carolina coast. There was widespread flooding. Data centers were rendered useless.

Fire creates other problems. You must use an FM-200 chemical-based fire control system to extinguish fires around information technology. You would be amazed how many companies have water-based sprinkler systems in and around their data centers. Chemical-based systems are expensive, but data is protected.

## How can you reduce risk?

First, recognize your risk. Is the business located in a coastal area? Is it near a river known to flood? Are forest fires a threat in your area? Second, you need a tested business continuance and disaster recovery plan (BCDR). A full 80 percent of the BCDR plan should focus on prevention and should include a security assessment. While you can't stop Mother Nature, you can prevent a business shutdown with a sound, executable plan designed to ensure ongoing business operations.

## How can Business Vitals help?

We start with a business impact and risk analysis and present strategies for business continuance and disaster recovery. We make sure there are no single points of failure in the event of a natural disaster. Finally, we will implement, test, and maintain the plan for you. Regardless of what happens in the world around you, you must have data confidentiality, integrity and availability.



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