

Hermine Weakens But Flooding, Business Data Loss Risks Remain

Sep 2, 2016 by Joe Panettieri

Although Hermine has been reduced from a hurricane to a tropical storm, experts are warning East Coast residents and business owners not to let their guard down — especially as high winds, tide surges and flooding threaten residential and commercial business areas.

Hermine slammed much of Florida early Friday before moving on to the Carolinas. The storm knocked out power from Tallahassee to Tampa Bay, the Orlando Sentinel reported. CNN estimated the Tallahassee area outages had impacted 100,000 people.

Still, residents and business owners across Florida likely let out a collective sigh of relief. By 4:30 p.m. ET on Friday, storm-related news cover no longer dominated the Orlando Sentinel's home page.

Even so, the Southeastern U.S. still faces the flash-flooding threats. The storm — though weakened — could sit eventually sit off the Mid-Atlantic coast for days, battering shores with strong winds and storm surges, CNN reported. Up to 10 inches of rain could fall in parts of Georgia and the Carolinas from Friday into Monday morning, CNN added.

Flooding and Power Loss: Data's Worst Enemies

With those concerns in mind, IT service providers and technology companies continue to closely monitor the storm, backup systems and business continuity services.

Among the key moves by vendors and channel partners:

- AT&T topped-off fuel at generators positioned at cell sites, installed and tested high-capacity back-up batteries at cell sites, installed "Quick Connect Generator Plugs" near cell sites. It has also staged other emergency response equipment in strategic locations. Its national reliability center is monitoring outages for quick action, the company said.
- AppRiver activated its free Digital Disaster Preparedness Service (DDPS). First made available in 2005, DDPS is a service designed to prevent businesses from losing email in the event of a mail server outage. It's free to businesses that may be in the path of Tropical Storm Hermine.
- Datto continues to promote a natural disaster survival guide to its MSP partners.
- [Earthcam has set up an extreme weather website to help observers monitor the storm.](#)

Tips From Florida

Addigy, which develops remote monitoring and management (RMM) software for Macs, warns that "slow moving tropical storms, over a ground that is already extremely saturated, can still cause a lot of damage."

Although Addigy's major infrastructure runs entirely on Amazon Web services, the company took the following precautionary steps in its Florida offices to protect its local working infrastructure, according to CEO Jason Dettbarn.

- Verified that the company has valid Mac TimeMachine backups, which is replicated offsite (Addigy monitors this). Also, the company verified that it had a valid offsite file backup with BackBlaze.
- Garbage bags were slipped over office equipment to protect hardware from potential ceiling leaks.
- Everything in the office was powered down and electronics on the ground were lifted onto tables, to guard against any minor flooding. Powering down equipment also protects the hardware from overheating if the air conditioning fails while electric service remains in place.

Longer-term Planning

Instead of scrambling to prepare for the "next" storm that threatens customer data, Backup Radar recommends you take the following steps for ongoing business continuity preparedness.

- See it to believe it. Ask for and provide a daily, weekly or at a minimum a monthly report showing success/failure of backups.
- Test your backups. Don't just trust that your provider has you covered. Know they have you covered. Most software providers now have a way to automate the testing of their backups.
- Create and refresh your Disaster Recovery (DR) Plan. This should include your recovery objectives (how long you can be down without it impacting your business or your customers, etc.). This should be tested at least yearly ahead of hurricane season for example.
- Document any and all changes. There are almost always changes to the DR plan on a yearly basis as you add new servers or applications into an environment. While doing the recovery, document what worked, what didn't and how you can proceed to fix it and re-test the recovery. You need to be sure as a business owner and IT professional that you can recover that environment quickly.

"Anyone in this business for long enough will tell you, the one thing you can bet on that will put a company out of business is data loss," says Patrick Leonard, founder & CEO of Backup Radar. "And losing your customers' data and their confidence is a hard reality to recover from."

