

G lvdvhu#hfryhu|#sodqv#jhw#ghz #kujhqf|

Changing weather patterns pose new threats to corporate data centers and cloud computing host sites.

Lucas Mearian

July 16, 2012 ([Computerworld](#))

Increasing numbers of weather-related disasters -- violent storms, wildfires that have ravaged more than 2 million acres in the Rocky Mountains, and drought conditions affecting some two-thirds of the United States -- should have IT executives scurrying to update their disaster recovery plans.

The message to IT managers from business continuity experts is a familiar one: Put backup data centers in diverse, far-flung locations, and make sure your cloud service providers maintain geographically dispersed hosting facilities.

Those calls have been largely ignored in the past, and it's unclear whether the changing weather patterns will spur corporate executives to take more notice now.

Disaster recovery experts say that the intensifying weather conditions are significantly increasing the dangers facing IT operations at businesses of all sizes.

"Last year was the worst year we've had in the history of disasters," said Al Berman, executive director of the Disaster Recovery Institute, an industry group.

In recent years, cloud computing champions have contended that buying hosted services was a way to guarantee that applications would stay up and running at all times and that data would remain safe and secure.

That claim, though, has increasingly been proven false. The latest example came late last month when severe thunderstorms in the mid-Atlantic states caused temporary shutdowns of cloud computing services, prompting at least one company to quickly adopt a new strategy.

[WhatsYourPrice.com ended its 18-month relationship](#) with Amazon.com's Amazon Web Services (AWS) unit after a storm-related outage at an AWS [data center](#) shuttered the online dating service's website twice for two-hour periods.

The outages prompted a flood of complaints from many of WhatsYourPrice.com's 400,000 active members and damaged the dating site's reputation for reliability, said CEO Brandon Wade.

WhatsYourPrice.com, named for the site's approach of having users buy and sell first dates, moved quickly to deploy servers in two colocation facilities, and hired another cloud provider, Fiber Hub, for data backup, Wade said.

Other websites affected by the Amazon outage included those of Netflix, Instagram and Pinterest.

In a statement, Amazon acknowledged that several of its "data centers had their utility power

impacted" by the storms, and that in one, "the redundant power [did] not operate correctly." The company contended that the outage impacted "a single digit percentage of our [Elastic Compute Cloud] instances in the US-East Region."

Experts also noted that despite past warnings, many major corporations still insist on maintaining IT operations in a single building within a corporate campus or on using third-party cloud computing services hosted only in nearby facilities.

Berman said he doesn't understand why so many companies, including several major banks, have long insisted on maintaining all IT operations at headquarters, clinging to the belief that data is safest when it's nearby. Executives at these companies have ignored warnings that a single regional disaster -- something that is becoming ever more likely -- can take out an entire IT infrastructure.

"If they were just smart enough to move their servers from one [region] to another, they'd avoid these issues," he said.

"I advise my clients that you can't depend on any one thing," said Dan Olds, an analyst at Gabriel Consulting Group. "You can't depend on the cloud unless you have something to fall back on."

This version of this story was originally published in Computerworld's print edition. It was adapted from [an article](#) that appeared earlier on Computerworld.com.