



Disaster Planning: Focus on Data

## Superstorm Serves Up Reminder About Data Protection

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Post-**Superstorm Sandy**, as security professionals prepare for disasters, they must consider the integrity and availability of data - an often overlooked **business continuity** element, says Alan Berman of DRI.



Alan Berman

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Sandy has come and gone, but in reviewing the lessons learned from this and previous disasters, business continuity pros especially need to develop a better handle on the continuity of organizations' data during and after an incident, says Berman, executive director of the Disaster Recovery Institute.

"We're under the impression, even in this condition, that when we come back everything will be like it is," Berman says in an **interview** with Information Security Media Group's Tom Field [transcript below].

Yet, in the wake of a water-bearing disaster such as Sandy, Berman says it's likely that server farms were flooded, adequate back-ups weren't prepared, proper distribution of data was overlooked, and the cloud wasn't extensively used to move data away from local areas impacted by the storm.

"My concern, once you get through the emergency aspects, is the ability of businesses to retain the data and come back at the point they left off," Berman says.

In an interview about disaster planning for Hurricane Sandy, Berman discusses:

- Public and private sector preparation for the storm;
- Key information security issues to be addressed;

Critical post-disaster issues.

In addition to serving as leader of the Disaster Recovery Institute, Berman is co-chair for the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation committee to create the new standard for the US Private Sector Preparedness Act. He is a CBCP, a NFPA committee member, a member of the ASIS BCP technical committee, a member of the committee of experts for ANSI-ANAB and a former member of the NY City Partnership for Security and Risk Management. Over a career that has spanned 25 years, he has served as a president and CIO for a major financial institution, national practice leader for operational resiliency at PricewaterhouseCoopers and global business continuity practice leader for Marsh.

## Preparing for Sandy

**TOM FIELD:** Hurricane Sandy is hitting the East Coast. From what you've observed over the past weekend, how prepared do you believe that public and private-sector organizations alike are for the impact of this storm?

**ALAN BERMAN:** I think that we're about to see the "perfect storm" hitting the U.S., and it's just remarkable that three things can happen at the same time. You can have a hurricane coming up the east coast and have a cold front coming down from the north, and at the same time you have a storm coming in from the west, all hitting at the same time is unprecedented. I think what we've seen, though, is a tremendous effort by the public sector to try to prevent the aftermath of the storm. Obviously, we can do little about what's going to happen to us, but we've learned something from Irene about water and the dangers that it faces, and the coordination with the private sector where businesses are literally closing down and the government is forcing them to close down to try to prevent casualties and damage.

## Strongest Planning Elements

**FIELD:** From my perspective on the outside, the communication looks like it's been strong. From your inside perspective, what are the strongest planning elements that you see in play?

**BERMAN:** We're seeing state planning and municipal planning. Federal government will be useful, and the national weather centers are giving bulletins, but we're seeing a huge effort by the state and municipalities to work hand-in-hand. I'm in New York, and we've already seen the New York Stock Exchange saying it's going to be closed for two days. Most of the businesses in lower Manhattan have closed at the behest of the state government, as well as shutting down the New York city subway system. Ninety percent of the people who travel into Manhattan for business,

especially lower Manhattan, take public transit, so this forced their hand that they had to close. As bad as we're going to see the winds, we're terribly worried about rain and what kind of waves we're going to see and how much flooding we're going to get.

The good thing is if you watch New York City, for the first time that I can remember they're actually covering up the grates over the subway systems., so that water doesn't poor down into the subway system.

## Weakest Planning Elements

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