



Case Study

Hurricane Irma no match for Wittock CPA's Cloud Hosting and Business Continuity Plan

Client

Wittock CPA

Wittock CPA, a financial services and accounting firm based in South Florida, has been experiencing exponential growth—including a fifteen-fold surge in staff—due to its specialty handling of the damage claims associated with the 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Teaming up with CBTS helped the company ride out Hurricane Irma in September 2017.

Challenge	CBTS solutions	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The South Florida-based client knew hurricane season often brings power outages that can halt the firm's operations. • Client knew it needed replication or secondary backup in the event of an outage. • Client's employees need access to critical data and applications and compliance regulations must be met. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fully managed CBTS hosted cloud environment housing high-availability infrastructure at a CBTS production data center and managing data protection and recoverability at a second CBTS site, both in the Midwest and safe from hurricane-related threats. • A fully managed data backup and recovery plan. • A hosted Microsoft Office 365 CRM integrated with all the company's back-end systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client was ready with a backup and disaster recovery plan in place when Hurricane Irma made landfall. • Employees who had power were able to connect and perform necessary work. • The CBTS 24x7 Support Center resolved connectivity issues for remote employees.

Challenge

In the months before the hurricane, the firm decided to assess its technology environment and identify the best options for hosting production systems in the CBTS Cloud along with backup and disaster recovery. With its location in Florida's infamous "Hurricane Alley," they knew it was critical to choose a solution to address four key challenges:

- Hurricane season often brings regional power outages that could halt the firm's operations for an undefined period.
- Understanding potential points of failure in its IT infrastructure, replication or secondary backup is a must to maintain operations during a tropical storm or hurricane.
- Employees need access to critical data and applications even if the region is experiencing power outages or complete loss of their facilities.
- Compliance regulations require the firm to meet specific timelines in processing and handling client data, so downtime is not an option.

Solution

Wittock CPA partnered with CBTS to transform the way it consumes IT resources. By implementing a hybrid cloud architecture, Wittock was able to house high availability infrastructure at a CBTS production data center, while managing data protection and recoverability at a second CBTS site. By locating critical assets in two Midwestern cities, Wittock minimized risks associated with natural disasters, which tend to occur more frequently in coastal states like Florida.

- A fully managed CBTS hosted cloud environment houses Wittock's most critical operational data and is available for their employees to access from wherever they can get their laptops onto an internet connection and securely VPN into their systems at CBTS. Allowing them access to data and applications from wherever they may need to relocate to or while mobile.
- In the event of an outage at the CBTS Data Center production site, CBTS has all of Wittock's systems backed up and replicated to a secondary site and can quickly recover their systems to the production cloud at the secondary CBTS site.
- A hosted Microsoft Office 365 CRM is integrated with all of Wittock's back-end systems.

"I've had a long career in the IT industry and know what it takes to protect a rapidly growing firm like Wittock CPA from simple incidents to much larger threats like a hurricane. Irma would put any organization to the test, but because we took the preemptive steps to implement business continuity and cloud hosting with CBTS, it was business as usual from an IT perspective."

– Craig Turner, Director of IT and Continuity

Results

The decision by the Wittock's IT staff to address backup and disaster recovery concerns proactively meant they were ready when Hurricane Irma made landfall in September 2017. Wittock and CBTS did not know the solution would be put to the test just months after implementation but quickly confirmed its success:

- Hurricane Irma did not affect Wittock's core IT services and operations despite widespread power outages across South Florida and including Wittock's own building and HQ.
- Though many employees were not able to reach the office due to roads blocked by fallen trees or other storm damage, employees who had power were able to connect and perform necessary work.
- People outside the hurricane's central threat zone stayed in communication and reported no operational difficulties in accessing critical applications and data.
- The CBTS 24x7 Support Center also worked with some of the remote non-technical business employees to resolve any connectivity issues so they could re-establish their connection to the system. Being able to work during a crisis, the employee noted, added a sense of calm and normalcy.

With its cloud solution and user connectivity solution thoroughly tested by the storm, Wittock management team is confident the firm has a strong defense against hurricanes and other downtime threats for the years to come.

"I've had a long career in the IT industry and know what it takes to protect a rapidly growing firm like Wittock CPA from simple incidents to much larger threats like a hurricane," said Craig Turner, Director of IT and Continuity. "Irma would put any organization to the test, but because we took the preemptive steps to implement business continuity and cloud hosting with CBTS, it was business as usual from an IT perspective."

"Craig and his team should be commended for being proactive to ensure the business could stay up and running during a storm like Irma," said Biff Myre, Solutions Director at CBTS. "Any organization should look to Wittock as a shining example of what they should be doing now before another catastrophic event strikes."