

Centurion Provides Uninterrupted Service to St. Tammany Federal Credit Union in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina

Up until several years ago, fast-growing St. Tammany Federal Credit Union, located in Slidell, LA, did not have a formal disaster recovery plan. Luckily for the credit union, Glenda Rushe, Chief Financial Officer at the credit union, attended a Jack Henry user conference and learned about Centurion Disaster Recovery and Centurion LiveVault. Realizing that the credit union did not even know if their tape back-ups were recoverable, Rushe successfully convinced the credit union to make the small investment and began working with Centurion for disaster recovery and continuous non-tape backups. It's a good thing they did.

The institution – like so many others – never dreamed that a disaster the magnitude of Hurricane Katrina would adversely affect the entire community, leave several of its employees without homes, cause wide-spread power outages, and close their institution for more than two weeks.

Fortunately, the credit union was able to recover from the disaster with data unscathed, and was able to provide its members and its community with uninterrupted service during a very trying time. As a result, St. Tammany has added many new members while increasing loans and deposits.

Katrina Arrives

When it became clear that Hurricane Katrina, then a Category 5 monster, would indeed bear down on New Orleans and the surrounding area, St. Tammany's management team and board of directors activated their disaster recovery plan.

But executing the plan was not the only major challenge facing St. Tammany: its employees needed to move themselves and their families to safer ground. Blocked evacuation routes, a scarcity of gasoline for cars, power and phone service outages, and lack of available rooms at hotels and motels meant employees were preoccupied and unable to help execute the disaster recovery plan.

Disaster Declared

Prior to Katrina making landfall, Rushe had packed up the credit union's laptop and evacuated to Pensacola, FL with the thought of returning to Slidell once the storm had passed.

Within two days, it became clear that no one would be able to return to Slidell in the near term. Rushe called Centurion Disaster Recovery and declared a disaster for the credit union. Although the disaster recovery plan called for Rushe to drive to Centurion's disaster recovery site in Birmingham, AL, a lack of gasoline and available hotel rooms made that impossible. With the help of Centurion, Rushe began processing from her motel room.

"Centurion was wonderful," recounts Rushe. "I'm not a technical person, and they walked me through setting up the computer, dialing into Centurion. We were able to process three days worth of transactions the very first day."



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Institution

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Assets

\$15 million

Locations

1

Employees

7

Founded

1957

Chief Financial Officer

Glenda Rushe

**Symitar Software
Solutions & Services**
Cruise®

Centurion Disaster Recovery®

NetTeller® MemberConnect™

Centurion LiveVault

The credit union was able to process up-to-date balances and other account information without any interruption in service. Rushe credits Centurion LiveVault with providing the online backup that enabled the credit union to continue business, even if "business" was located in a motel room.

"I am so thankful we have Centurion LiveVault," says Rushe. "Because of Centurion LiveVault, all of our data was able to be recovered. It was smooth and seamless."

Of course, working out of a motel room, worried about friends and family affected by the hurricane, and unable to return home puts a great deal of stress on anyone. Rushe is thankful that the combination of Jack Henry, Centurion Disaster Recovery, and Centurion LiveVault meant she didn't have to worry about work.

"Because of all the craziness going on, I'm so thankful that work was painless. I could do the daily processing, and then get back to worrying about everything else," she chuckles.

Back to Normal

Two weeks later, St. Tammany employees and the rest of the community began to return to Slidell. However, widespread power outages still affected the credit union, and although they opened their doors for business, Rushe continued to process out of her home until power was restored.

Rushe admits, however, that not focusing on the employee side of the disaster was a mistake. "I never anticipated the employee side," she says. "Some of our employees didn't have homes, their children couldn't go to school, and their parents had two feet of mud in their homes. Although we had thought about what we would do if the building was useless, we did not take into account the entire community being affected."

On Thursday, September 16, 2005, power and Internet connectivity was restored to the credit union. That night, Centurion transferred the processing done over the prior 15 days to the credit union server and by Friday morning, St. Tammany was up and running as if nothing had happened.



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