

## **Disaster – Are you prepared?**

I received a phone call at 8 AM on June 28<sup>th</sup> from the controller at one of our clients. She was standing outside their facility while firefighters were attempting to put out a fire that started in the middle of the night. I left immediately for their site. As we do their Microsoft Network maintenance, I called our staff while driving. By the time I reached the site, Shawn had arranged for their email to be spooled to backup by their Internet Service Provider. Knowing their hardware and software needs allowed Shawn to start gathering server replacement data immediately.

When I arrived the firefighters were still extinguishing hot spots. The electrical fire, which started in the middle of the night, had burned a major part of the manufacturing area and offices. The fire-safe file cabinet in the Controller's office survived. However, cracks had developed and everything inside was wet. This included the computer backup tapes that were stored on-site. Unfortunately, the tapes were damaged by water and heat. Although the file cabinet was rated as being safe for paper, it was not safe for computer media.

**Lesson 1 - for the fire-safe file to be considered media safe, an additional fire-safe box must be inserted into the fire-safe file cabinet drawer, preferably close to the floor.**

The Owner arranged for the office staff to move to a new site requiring us to add a terminal server, a second hardware firewall and DSL line. The fire damage was significant. Bar code readers were destroyed. Recovered diskettes and CDs were a total loss. The backup tapes were in poor condition. Because the paper licenses survived, we were able to order replacement media from the software manufacturers.

**Lesson 2 – copies of all program media, licenses and backup tapes should be stored off site.**

After insurance review, hardware orders were placed and received by July 7. Shawn was able to retrieve each person's document's folder and common folders containing Word and Excel files from the backup tapes. He was able to recover email and the Exact Macola database as of the previous year. Summary monthly information was recovered and used by the Controller to make summary entries for the current year through the previous month. July entries were rebuilt based on records in the shipping/receiving office and bank records.

The office was back in operation by July 11 which was less than two weeks from the date of the fire due to the dedicated effort from many people. It was a successful recovery from a very unfortunate incident!

NOTE - According to Exact Software, another Company in Chicago had a fire the same week. They stored their backup tapes off site, but never tested them to make sure they were properly backing up. The tapes were blank. The Company went out of business.

**Lesson 3 - test your backup tapes.**