CNS /Update Newsletter Feature

Hurricanes Don't Stop CNS

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UF Information Technology

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Season of the Storms

The Season of the Storms…that’s how August and September of 2004 will be remembered in the minds of many Floridians. With hurricanes barrelling over our state one after another, CNS had an unprecedented and formidable task: to preserve connectivity and to protect machines and data in the face of extremely adverse weather conditions, and to do it several times over during a short period of time. Fortunately, CNS has taken a very pro-active posture on data integrity and safety during these types of events, with planning and preparation a key focus.

So, how did we do?

According to plan

"We did very well; everything went according to plan," said Rocky Essex of Information Services, assistant chair of CNS’s Hurricane Team. "We never lost connectivity to the Internet, all of the machines were kept up and running, and the building itself came through the storms in very good shape. And we got back to normal operations immediately after each storm passed."

During storms, as always, CNS is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. One major contribution to smooth operations during the storms came from having members of the Hurricane Team on hand during the storms themselves. CNS Special Projects Manager Allan Pither, chair of the Hurricane Team, and Senior Engineering Tech/Designer Penny Latta both spent many hours on site during the storms, sending out hourly updates on the status of the CNS operations to CNS staff and other members of the UF IT community. Weather is monitored on-line and by radio and television to ensure information is accurate and timely.

Planning Ahead

CNS did not wait for this unbelievable hurricane season to prepare. CNS implements and updates our Hurricane / Multi-Disaster Plan at the beginning of each hurricane season, which
works in conjunction with the University's Master Emergency Plan. Each year, we make the necessary changes to reflect the newest realities of information technology so that we are prepared in the case of a major storm or other disaster. The Hurricane Team does a pre-season check, a in-storm check and post-event assessment for each storm.

The Focus: Data Preservation

All the Hurricane Team members agreed that the major focus of the committee's activities was data preservation, most of which comes down to familiar best practices and good common sense. Their best advice for future storms? Make backups of your data and applications, and protect them from water in plastic or other waterproof containers.

Besides water, power interruptions can be a major headache when it comes to protecting and preserving machines and data. CNS is well equipped with an Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS), which includes an emergency generator to keep the Data Center up and running. We always have a three-day supply of diesel fuel for this generator, and the generator is routinely tested. In addition, our mobile generators and vehicles are fueled and garaged in strategic locations on campus, ready to meet the needs of our resources located in other buildings.

Minimal Problems, Swift Recovery

Hurricanes Frances and Jeanne, in particular, had the potential to do serious damage to CNS's resources and services. Thanks to the forward thinking of CNS staff and management, problems during the storms were minimal and recovery was swift.

Your Comments are Welcome

We welcome your comments and suggestions on this and all UFIT documentation. Please send your comments to:

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