



RECORDER'S OFFICE IN LINN COUNTY, IOWA IS PREPARED FOR FLOOD WITH E-BACKUP SYSTEM

Linn County, Iowa
Population: 201,000
Workstations: 18
Documents Backed-up: 1,700,000

The rain kept on coming during June of 2008 in Linn County Iowa. After days of rising riverbanks, the water spilled over into Cedar Rapids, the county seat in Iowa—resulting in \$45 million damage to county buildings, equipment and roads. Total cost of the flooding topped \$1 billion dollars. While the people of Linn County's spirits remain positive, the flooding left them with a massive cleanup project in the months ahead.

THE CHALLENGE:

When Joan McCalmant, County Recorder of Linn County, Iowa learned they were being evacuated from the county building, she and her staff had a few hours to prepare. To prepare for the flood, Joan and her staff carried out over 400 historic books containing county birth and marriage records from their vault and moved equipment and other records to tabletops. The water rose to 5.5 feet; severely damaging the county building and its contents.

"I've been working in this office since 1986, and this was the most difficult thing I've ever dealt with. I had no servers and no access to my recorded images initially. We only had our handwritten records and many of them were soaked with water," explained McCalmant, County Recorder of Linn County.

THE SOLUTION

Linn County had been a customer of Cott Systems for at least 30 years, although their remote eBackup system had been implemented for less than a year. The county purchasing department acted quickly to secure temporary office space in a mall about a week and a half after the flooding.

Cott's eBackup System ensured that mission critical data and records were securely stored electronically in a secure offsite location, thus McCalmant was assured the records could be recovered. As customers scan documents on a normal day at the Recorder's Office, they are continually backed up offsite. The system links images with records and allowing searches to be performed while adding new data.

Waiting for access to the backup tapes would have added a week for the office to get back up and running. So Richard Stern, Systems Technician, at Cott Systems, copied Linn County's information from their server and rebuilt a new server for them in approximately 70 hours. This allowed the Recorder's Office to receive documents and operate for the day electronically—which was critical because homeowners need a copy of their deed to file for assistance from FEMA.

Because Linn County was utilizing Cott's Web Hosting, they were able to maintain an internet presence while their offices were under water. Cott's Web Hosting allows counties to ensure internet presence without the expense and overhead typically associated with launching an independent site. Using Linn County's indices and images, Cott establishes and maintains a website hosted and managed on a secure server. Because it is separate from the internal system, it gave them the assurance of record access even in the event of a disaster.

Linn County benefited from Cott's Web Hosting in several ways:

- *Alternative Archive Method*-- Auditors often advise recording offices to seek alternative archive methods and Web Hosting ensures that your search data is automatically archived and stored in a secure off site data center.
- *Cost Savings*—Infrastructure costs are shared by many customers, allowing offices to avoid large up-front investments and providing a reasonable monthly payment.
- *Growth Potential*—Cott's web hosting grows to fit your needs and storage requirements and can include records already in storage.
- *Easy Conversion of Historical Data*—Cott can accept historic information in varying formats and convert it to be compatible with your new system.

"Cott built a server for me, and because we had remote backup, they were able to load my indexes and images on the server before they drove from Ohio to Iowa to deliver it to me," noted McCalmant.

In an effort to do whatever was necessary to help Linn County get up and running quickly, Stern provided a server, extra printers and workstations to Cedar Rapids as 'loaners' at no charge until the county's replacement equipment arrived. The temporary location was challenging since it did not have the power required to run the Recorder's Office nor did it have the proper cabling. Stern worked in the temporary location with the county's IT department to get enough power and external connections to allow for cabling through the office, web hosting, and online backup.

"Due to Cott's quick response, we were able to avoid doing work manually on paper, which would have created a backlog due to requiring a second electronic entry," noted McCalmant.

RESULTS

"Surprisingly, I was one of the first county offices to be back up and running after the flood. We had our disaster recovery plan in place for less than a year and it was a good insurance policy," explained McCalmant.

The online indexing was running in about a week and a half which allowed people to look up their own deeds and print a copy if needed for FEMA application. Linn County provides online access to records back to the 1970s and fortunately, the website never went down.

"We were very lucky to have Cott's eBackup system and Web Hosting and we'll be working in the temporary location for at least a year, but at least we have our records. Our water damaged books are being freeze-dried for optimal restoration. "We were grateful to get our system up and running quickly, because it allowed people to move forward with their lives," noted McCalmant.

