Nautalex News

Network & Internet Solutions for Business ***Fall 2003***

Power Outages: Minimizing the Impact

After this summer's East Coast-wide blackout, everyone knows that you buy flashlights, make sure you have gasoline, cash, and medications, stock up on non-perishables and buy a pack of cards.

Have you thought about your business' computer systems? Here are some tips on preparing your office for electrical downtime:

1. **Battery Backups:** A UPS (uninterruptible power supply) is intended to keep your computer or server running until files can be saved and the system can shutdown "gracefully", without damage to registry or databases. Some UPS units will even shutdown your server for you. Make sure to regularly test your UPS unit as they get older. Some UPS units are just batteries; others include surge protection or line conditions, your MIS support can advise you as to the correct unit for your situation.
2. **Surge Suppression:** In case of power surges, surge suppression devices will protect your hardware from damage or destruction.
3. **Line Conditioning:** These devices protect your systems from both dips and surges in power. Note: Many UPS units include surge suppression and line conditioning functions.
4. **Use your UPS correctly:** Use the UPS for computer and networking systems only – and remember to put systems' monitor(s) on UPS as well. Do not use the UPS for laser printers, photocopiers, or other high-demand devices, as this will shorten the life of the UPS.
5. **Use Common Sense:** Just like at home, you may want to consider shutting down sensitive electronic equipment during a power outage, and bringing it back on line after power has been restored and is stable.
6. **Emergency Lighting:** Remember to have emergency lighting in your server room (even if it's just a flashlight!).
7. **Don't forget your phone system:** Consider all of the above for your company's phone system, and consider having several hours of UPS battery time for it. Consider how you will deal with incoming phone calls if your phone system is dead, for example, keep a "plain old phone" to plug into an emergency line.
8. **Where are your vital records?** How will you contact your customers and suppliers during an extended blackout? If all of your records are exclusively electronic, this could be difficult.
9. **Security Systems:** What about security during power outages? And when power is restored, remember to test electronic security systems and their communication links.
10. **AC-DC Car Adapters:** If cell phones are a vital part of your business communications network, make sure you have a cell phone charger that can power your cell phone from your car battery. You can even get car chargers for your laptop computers, keeping some of your work force functioning.

"There is no limit to what can be accomplished if it doesn't matter who gets the credit." Emerson

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

TIRED OF SPAM TAKING UP YOUR PRODUCTIVE WORK TIME?

Are you tired of spam emails taking up time in your valuable workday?

If you are receiving only 2-3 unsolicited emails a day spam is a minor inconvenience. If you are receiving 40-50+ emails a day, you are spending an average of 10 seconds per E-mail in deciding what to do with it. This adds up to over 60 hours per year – more than 7 work days doing a task that isn't productive to your work. The true cost depends on your rate of pay.

Servers handling large amounts of E-mail can crash due to mail overload, causing loss of business costs.

Nautalex can help you select the anti-spam software package that is right for your business and your budget.

For further information on which anti-spam package is right for you, call Nautalex at 519-622-8840 or e-mail solutions@nautalex.com.

QUIZMASTER'S CONTEST

In 1996 what was the most common use of computers on the job?

E-mail or fax your response to Quizmaster at quizmaster@nautalex.com

The Great Blackout of 2003 and Lessons Learned

This summer during the blackout of 2003, many discovered the value of Uninterruptible Power Supplies. A UPS is the device between the power supply (electrical outlet) and a device (computer or server) to prevent undesired features of power source supply (outages, surges, and sags) from affecting the performance of the device. Those with healthy UPSs were able to bring down computers and servers gently. While those with old or ailing UPSs, found that sudden system outages caused by the power failure created a myriad of problems once full power was restored.

Some form of battery (generally lead-acid) powers most UPSs, which takes over supplying power to a computer when the electricity goes out. As a battery gets older its life becomes shorter, so it is important to check the charge holding ability and periodically replace the battery supply to the UPS. These batteries have a general lifespan of 1 to 5 years before they should be replaced. Testing periodically, following a base level backup of all systems, could also give you an idea of how well your UPS would perform should we experience another blackout.

Don't get caught in the dark again – schedule UPS checkups as part of your routine maintenance. **To schedule a UPS checkup with Nautalex – call us at 519-622-8840 or E-mail us at sales@nautalex.com**.

Critical Patches – Are They Really That Important?

The best defense against system vulnerability is a pro-active approach and quick response to critical patch releases.

Critical patches are those enhancements designed to fix any critical defects that may arise in software. Defects are identified as being 'critical' if they seriously affect the stability and integrity of your system.

It is vital to the working environment of your system that the critical patches be downloaded and installed as soon as possible after the patch release, or you could find yourself suffering from a crippling system failure. Most updates fix security vulnerability issues while other updates fix system stability problems.

Implementing a patch is often a simple download and install procedure, but in some cases with critical patches there needs to be a meshing of the patch with the other programs on the operating system. Since all patch deployments require a change to the live environment, there is some risk of business disruption.

When significant vulnerabilities are identified, you need to be able to identify how the patch will work and whether any other system in your live environment will be affected and how that effect will be dealt with to avoid business disruption. The person installing the patch must ask several questions before implementing it on the live environment:

- How do we determine patch relevance, authenticity and urgency?
- How do we ensure that only approved, standard configurations are deployed to the live environment?
- Do we maintain up to date configuration data?
- How do we plan to deploy releases into production and how do we test the releases?

Many organizations do not have an established mechanism for processing critical patches, and are often not aware that there have been critical patch releases that are vital to their system. **Nautalex can oversee and complete your critical patch management process for you.** We keep on top of the patch release information, analyze your environment and implement the patches following standard processes for release deployment.

Archiving E-mail – Are you compliant with government regulations?

E-mails have become critical, for many businesses, in the exchange of information. Retaining these important e-mails that have been sent and received, as required by law, can be a corporate administration and storage nightmare.

More than 60% of business critical information is stored within corporate messaging systems (E-mail and instant messaging). In the messages financial expectations are discussed, quotes and promises given, sales are made, and customers submit orders or make complaints. All these e-mails need to be organized and readily accessible, while stored for 5 – 7 years like your financial records and other critical business information. Storage of these vital 'files' can be done via your server hard disks, CDs, DVDs, and other electronic storage media devices. Saving a copy of every E-mail and response on your mail server uses up space that can cause your server speed to slow, unless well indexed and administered.

Archiving can put an end to frustrating searches for emails thus reducing the cost of storage by 50% or more by releasing space on the main storage and improving performance by offloading older emails while filtering out unwanted messages. There are archiving programs that allow your messaging to be automatically stored and indexed while limiting access and searching ability to authorized users.

Archived data remains encrypted and is stored and managed according to guidelines that prevent data corruption or inadvertent deletions. Those that use a web-based system are simpler for the average user. An average IT administrator spends 5-6 hours per week recovering old messages since more than 80% of end users cannot recover them on their own.

If your company is doing business via emails and are unsure of your standard archiving policy, **contact Nautalex (519-622-8840 or E-mail: sales@nautalex.com) to ensure you are compliant with government regulations**.

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Nautalex designs and implements fully integrated computer network systems for businesses. We offer consulting, outsourced MIS services, website and Internet application development, software, database design and maintenance, hardware and peripherals, and cost-effective network solutions.

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