

THE STATE OF MICHIGAN

EMC service, support, and storage help coordinate urgent response to massive oil spill



ESSENTIALS

Challenges

- Major oil spill required immediate incident response
- Temporary emergency Incident Command Center required IT infrastructure

Solutions

- EMC Global Services
- EMC Customer Support
- EMC Celerra Unified Storage

Key benefits

- Storage array identified, delivered, and running just six hours following emergency request
- Timely access to critical geographic information system (GIS) for nearly 160 responders
- Fast response to changing Incident Command Center needs

In the summer of 2010, crisis teams were in a race against time when a ruptured pipeline leaked more than 800,000 gallons of oil into a creek feeding Michigan's Kalamazoo River. The spill quickly spread at least 35 miles downriver and threatened to reach Lake Michigan. Local, state, and federal agencies, along with private crews converging on the area, needed sophisticated maps generated by geographic information systems (GIS) to mount the containment effort—and they needed them fast.

“There wasn’t a local site that had the technology in place for responding to an incident of this magnitude. An elementary school was chosen as the command center,” says Carol Steele Sherman, director of Department of Technology, Management, and Budget (DTMB) Data Center Operations. “Responders needed everything from GIS and desktop computers to cell phone service. The school also became the site for around-the-clock press conferences and visits by numerous officials, including the Governor.”

EMERGENCY CALL GOES OUT TO EMC

When the DTMB was called into action on July 28, its incident response team went to the school to assess the situation and mobilize resources. Because responders needed to map, capture, analyze, and display data about oil slicks, GIS technology was a critical emergency management tool. A GIS integrates large datasets and images with geographic information so users can make informed decisions.

Technicians at the command center set up servers and printers overnight to meet the most urgent needs. The GIS server ran short of file space by the next morning, which left people at the site unable to access GIS data and applications.

A dedicated storage infrastructure was needed to support an operation of this scale. However, DTMB lacked a suitable spare storage system. In addition, there was no time to purchase new storage for the command center. The department placed a call to EMC, a long-time business partner and provider of the storage infrastructure for the State of Michigan’s three data centers.

“In an emergency, you need people you can count on,” says Sherman. “When it comes to storage, our past successes with EMC came to mind.”

EMC GLOBAL SERVICES DOES WHAT IT TAKES

EMC Global Services’ customer support center received DTMB’s emergency call on July 29, requesting dedicated storage that had to be up and running within six hours. EMC offered to loan a Celerra® unified storage system, which was serving as a test box for a new operating system in an EMC lab near Detroit. An EMC customer support engineer performed the Celerra data migration and reformat, reloaded a new operating system, and drove two hours to transport the Celerra system across the state that same afternoon.

“EMC accomplished what seemed to be ‘Mission Impossible.’ You can have the best hardware and software in the world, but it’s not enough unless you have a partner willing and able to quickly respond to emergencies and install, configure, and support your systems.”

RICK HOFFMAN
DTMB STORAGE MANAGEMENT
SECTION MANAGER

The customer support engineer, a second EMC engineer from Grand Rapids, and the Celerra system arrived at the school in Marshall where DTMB personnel had pre-staged the site with network connectivity and electric power. The EMC engineers quickly configured the system and performed a data migration from the GIS server to the Celerra. The storage system was ready for use by the deadline.

“EMC accomplished what seemed to be ‘Mission Impossible,’” says Rick Hoffman, DTMB Storage Management Section manager. “You can have the best hardware and software in the world, but it’s not enough unless you have a partner willing and able to quickly respond to emergencies and install, configure, and support your systems.”

At the height of the containment operation, as many as 160 people from local, state, and federal agencies, in addition to the private pipeline operator, depended on the EMC Celerra system. Users had reliable, high-speed access to GIS data and other shared files, which kept everyone informed about current conditions.

“In a crisis, access to the best resources and information is critical,” says Mike Ashton, manager for the DTMB Infrastructure Services Program Management Office. “Without EMC, the collaboration among the multiple agencies would have undoubtedly been hampered. During our bids for new technology deployments, the technical solution is usually 30 to 40 percent of the evaluation score, and the quality of the support and staff equates to the remaining 60 to 70 percent. EMC’s customer support is a huge part of the total solution.”

CONTINUED SUPPORT

Emergency management requires agility. Clean-up was still underway as the new academic year approached at the end of August. EMC returned to relocate the storage system from the elementary school to a different facility nearby.

EMC continued to support the State of Michigan as one of the largest oil spills in the Midwest was contained. On August 26, the State transferred the clean-up operation to the oil pipeline company. EMC extended its support for the environmental clean-up by allowing the pipeline company to continue using the Celerra system until the work wrapped up.

“Had we not been able to respond so quickly, the disaster may have been a lot worse with oil flowing into Lake Michigan and fast rising rivers,” reflects Sherman. “There would have been far greater damage to property and wildlife, devastating our beaches, tourism, and fishing. EMC’s support engineers were extremely knowledgeable during this crisis. The way EMC performed in this emergency is another example of their total commitment to exceptional customer support.”

“It’s clear that top-of-the-line support is part of EMC’s culture, and their technicians and other staff embody the spirit of that culture,” adds Hoffman.

CONTACT US

To learn more about how EMC products, services, and solutions help solve your business and IT challenges, contact your local representative or authorized reseller—or visit us at www.EMC.com

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