

# Louisiana Supreme Court puts in a disaster recovery plan to weather every contingency in a storm.



## Customer Profile

Industry: Judicial government service

Company: Louisiana Supreme Court

Employees: 150

Data sites: 2

Remote sites: 5

## Business Impact Summary

### Business:

The Louisiana Supreme Court (LASC), located in New Orleans, is the judicial power of Louisiana, and is chartered to interpret the Constitution and the laws of the state. Three thousand cases come through the LASC annually, with the Court hearing an average of 50 cases in its courtroom each year. The court also is the repository for all the documentation relevant to each case, in addition to a plethora of research resources for all the courts of Louisiana to use at will.

### Challenge:

Louisiana is considered a "hurricane" state and is "on alert" six months of the year. Because of this, LASC needed a disaster recovery plan in place when hurricanes (or any other disaster) hit. This plan would need to ensure protection of LASC's volumes of emails, research data, law records, court transactions and public service information. It would also have to ensure that all court data and interactions could be continually available during local or even state-wide power and communications outages.

### Solution:

To ensure that IT operations keep running in a disaster, and that critical court data is fully protected, the Louisiana Supreme Court leveraged the CA Recovery Management solution: CA ARCserve Backup and CA XOssoft High Availability software. Using these CA products, LASC is now assured that their IT systems, services and security will remain fully available and protected when a disaster occurs.

### Result:

LASC has already gone through an arduous test of its disaster recovery system with Hurricane Gustav. Despite a state-wide evacuation and massive power outages, LASC was able to keep communications open throughout the storm and protect critical court data and emails. As a result, LASC has improved service continuity, court agility and cost control. The CA Recovery Management solution saves precious state dollars for the court by protecting irreplaceable legal documents and other court records. With a well-designed disaster recovery system, LASC can now remain a productive and reliable public service to the state.



## Business

### Final rulings on Louisiana's statutory laws

Louisiana Supreme Court is the judicial power of Louisiana and is the centralized location for final rulings on all matters related to estate, criminal and civil matters. The court averages 3,000 to 3,200 filings annually, and its judges typically hear 50 cases a year in oral arguments. In addition, the court is the repository for all documents related to these cases and these documents must be accessible to all members of the court as well as to all the courts of Louisiana.

## Challenge

### Uninterrupted access to LASC's documentation and communications

By the time a case reaches the Supreme Court, it has usually been in the court system for years. In addition to the basic arguments and facts of the case, the filings often include volumes of supporting research and data from each party. Throughout the process, lawyers, judges, and law clerks need to have access to the latest files and research at a moment's notice.

All of this legal research, documentation, and history must be preserved as part of the court records, along with the final rulings and opinions rendered in each case. All told, the amount of paperwork related to decisions, rulings and legal references can equal millions of dollars in professional man hours.

Since the court is the storehouse for all these documents and maintains responsibility for them, the court needed to put in place a fail-safe solution to protect this research and case data in the event of a disaster. At minimum, the data had to be backed up and replicated to a remote site in case of power outages and a communications shut down. As Peter Haas, director of technology for LASC, said, "It was absolutely necessary that we protect our case information and keep communications open during an emergency in order to keep the court system running. We needed a disaster recovery (DR) plan where we wouldn't lose any court data, a single email or the ability to communicate at any point during a storm."

## Solution

### Lessons learned lead to strong planning

Right before Katrina, Peter Haas was just finishing a comprehensive DR plan - which included securing a remote site to act as a "fail-safe" site and shoring up their back up software. They were making presentations to the LASC administrating body for financing. Unfortunately, Katrina struck before the plan was authorized.

During Katrina, Haas and his team were thus able to see the enormity of how a storm could threaten the safety of their documentation as well as stop court activity indefinitely.

By the time LASC had recovered from Katrina, the next hurricane season was just around the corner. "We had 6 months to do what most shops need to do in 2 or 3 years," explained Haas.

The first thing Haas did was examine their original plan. "We had to look at what we had been building in our original DR plan and what needed improving. It was a real point of self examination. We even examined the people because they can be points of failure, too," explained Haas.

*"Our disaster recovery system has reshaped how we do business. Any new software or tool we consider, we question how it will integrate into our disaster recovery plan."*

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**Peter Haas.**

Director of Technology

Louisiana Supreme Court

### A disaster recovery plan goes into place

The key requirements for an effective disaster recovery plan include: functionality of all communications in power outages, removing single points of failure, and ensuring access to generators and air conditioners.

The first item on Haas' list was to remove all single points of failure. LASC also had to find a remote location (a hot site) where data and communications could be safe and operational, when needed. A hot site has all the equipment needed to ensure continuous operation, including office space, furniture, telephone, jacks and computer equipment.

The team spent 3 months identifying a hot site, the equipment they needed, what systems needed to function, and the software they would need to continually replicate the data on servers, so the latest content would be available from the back-up servers if the main ones went down. Haas had good luck with funding for his Disaster Recovery plan. He explained, "I had a captive audience when trying to get money for the program since the administration knew it was something we had to do. Mouths were still hanging open from the power and destruction of Katrina."

*"We thought the data transfer rate could be an issue as we failed over and back, but CA XOsoft High Availability was amazing, seamlessly adjusting to the conditions."*

In 2006, on the last day of May, right before hurricane season, they had their disaster recovery system in place.

### The plan itself

LASC decided on 5 different replication tools and a test environment. Before Katrina, Haas was using CA ARCserve as a backup but, in his words, "backup software is not a disaster recovery plan."

"We needed a replication fail safe solution and we tested a lot of products. At the time there weren't many. We picked CA's very intuitive CA XOsoft High Availability software because it represented best practices. It was a complete package, not piecemeal. In addition, CA is a Microsoft partner so we knew we wouldn't need to take anything off the server, if we had a problem with it. The CA XOsoft High Availability software is very clean and robust; failing over is a click. That kind of ease of use was how we gauged a product," said Haas.

After LASC bought the solution, they were able to install it with minimal assistance.

LASC continued to use CA ARCserve Backup as part of their recovery management strategy to execute regular backups that help safeguard their business information. CA ARCserve's tape backup interacts with Acronis, an imaging tool that replicates images every other day to tape.

To ensure that their DR Plan was regularly tested prior to an actual disaster, Louisiana State Supreme Court also deployed CA's DR testing option CA XOsoft Assured Recovery, which verifies the functionality of the replicated data without impacting business operations or placing the data at risk.

"CA's software worked during our evaluation and during DR tests," continued Haas.

"But then nature gave us a real test after we went live: Hurricane Gustav."

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#### Peter Haas

Director of Technology  
Louisiana Supreme Court

LASC was fully prepared. They had their back up air conditioners and generators in both the court and the hot site. "The only thing I was concerned about was bandwidth when we failed over, since we had email and databases, and we were failing over using laptops from wireless connections. It seemed fragile – but we stayed live through the whole event," said Haas. "And we learned from Gustav that there were more items that required our attention. We saw that the entire process of Disaster Recovery is a living breathing thing that is never completed but grows as the organization does."

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**Peter Haas**

Director of Technology  
Louisiana Supreme Court

The hurricane oddly went up and down the state creating recurring power outages, and the CA XOsoft software had to perform twice without losing any data or communication flow. "We thought the data transfer rate could be an issue as we failed over and back, but CA XOsoft High Availability was amazing, seamlessly adjusting to the conditions," said Haas.

The CA solution has helped in times other than natural disasters. LASC had a problem with their production exchange server. They were unable to fix the problem and so Haas and his team decided to do a fail over to the CA XOsoft replica server and repopulate from the back up server. When the data transferred back to the original server, the data did not have the errors.

## Results

### Secure records and communications in every emergency

The ability to protect LASC's email, blackberry servers, file servers and Oracle servers can almost not be judged from a financial point of view. Any compromise or loss of the data would result in irreparable damage.

Now with CA XOsoft High Availability software, LASC is no longer anchored to the court building and can safely move data as needed. This is useful not only in case of hurricanes, but in case of fires or floods.

Disaster recovery is now an integral part of how Haas and his IT team plan. "It has reshaped how we do business. For any new software or tool we consider, we question how it will integrate into our disaster recovery plan," adds Haas.

In particular, LASC has been able to:

- Ensure all records and communications are secure
- Keep communications going through any disaster
- Know that critical court data is protected
- Continue serving their constituency responsibly
- Save on costs of disaster downtime and lost information