

# THINK

## CRISIS MANAGEMENT

**M**anaging in a crisis requires federal agencies and departments to be resourceful. Enabling government workers to communicate and collaborate securely while working remotely is a top priority for federal agencies.

Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP) is a process by which all government organizations are required to have contingency plans for maintaining services in the event of a disaster. In the aftermath of almost any emergency, organizations must put these plans into action and begin immediate crisis management.

Collaboration technologies such as Microsoft Groove, a new part of Office Enterprise 2007, and enhanced unified communication solutions help ensure employees stay in touch with colleagues no matter where they are located. Federal agencies are increasingly finding that leveraging current technologies can provide a cost effective, integrated solution for emergency preparedness.

Threats of a terrorist attack, pandemic or other natural or manmade disaster have prompted the federal government to hone disaster recovery plans, forcing them to consider how to best leverage the cost-effective tools they already use daily to speed responsiveness following a disaster.

In emergency situations, agencies need robust systems that provide accurate information, enabling workers to function remotely in times of disruptions. The cost of investing in point solutions to resolve a single challenge in an overall COOP plan could end up turning into an expensive and inefficient proposition as agencies struggle to integrate those investments into their broader operational systems.

Federal agencies seek solutions to automate and integrate security operations so they can streamline processes and workflow. Microsoft and its partners have developed solutions that help reduce the impact of jurisdictional borders. These solutions enable first responder agencies to easily and efficiently collaborate in emergencies. During an emergency, government organizations must ensure that remote workers can access applications and the data they need. The work these employees do must be seamlessly integrated into centralized agency data stores.

### The Microsoft Difference

Microsoft's solutions address agency concerns at both the device and network levels. Using Microsoft technologies, government organizations are finding they already possess most of the software they need to manage during a crisis, at both department and agency-wide levels.

Primary components of Microsoft's crisis management arsenal include:

- **Microsoft Office** allows workers to be productive anywhere using collaboration technologies such as Groove, a new part of Office Enterprise 2007, and Office Communications Server for web conferencing, video and VoIP to ensure employees stay in touch with managers.
- **Microsoft .NET** application development environment provides government IT staffs with the ability to build, deploy, manage and use secure, connected solutions in mixed computing environments.
- **Microsoft Office Groove 2007** creates a secure data-sharing environment for workgroups that function across organizational and network boundaries.

One federal agency that deployed Groove as part of its Hurricane Katrina response was able to speed recovery of operations, quickly identifying which employees were displaced and what resources were needed to set up and enable workers to function either remotely, or in nearby Baton Rouge offices. And after Hurricane Katrina, teams from the Federal Emergency Management Administration and the Department of Housing and Urban Development used Groove to communicate and share information securely across agency networks as they worked together to assess the aftereffects of the hurricane.

Microsoft technologies that address crisis management aren't expensive add-ons. These capabilities are available in commonly used software currently licensed by most government agencies. Microsoft provides the software, people and expertise to help agencies manage and respond, quickly and efficiently, in nearly any emergency situation.

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*Agency personnel are invited to visit local Microsoft Technology Centers, which offer services at no charge to aid in crisis management. For more information, please visit: <http://www.microsoft.com/federal>. Or contact [askfed@microsoft.com](mailto:askfed@microsoft.com).*

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