County Protects Public Safety Data with Veeam

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— Rick Olson, Server Administrator, Yakima County

The Business Challenge

Emergencies can happen anytime and anywhere, making public safety the top priority in local governments across the United States. To respond quickly in an emergency, 911 dispatchers, police, fire and emergency medical services (EMS) require immediate, uninterrupted access to data.

Fast access to data is even more critical when first responders must travel great distances. That’s the case in Yakima County, which is approximately 4,300 square miles, nearly the size of Connecticut.

“Time is of the essence in a county our size; that’s why our first responders must have all the data they need at their fingertips,” said Rick Olson, Server Administrator for Yakima County. “Data must be available 24.7.365.”

Olson said unreliable backup put data availability at risk.

“It was common for backup to fail for no apparent reason, yet the backup vendor couldn’t provide a reasonable explanation or a resolution. I spent eight hours each week troubleshooting backup,” he said.

Olson’s boss sent him a link to Gartner’s Magic Quadrant for Data Center Backup and Recovery Solutions. He asked Olson to pick four solutions, do some research, and narrow the field down to one. Veeam® Availability Suite™, a leader in the Magic Quadrant, was among the four.

Yakima County is located in the center of the state of Washington. Established in 1865 and named for a tribe of Native Americans who settled the area, Yakima County is home to more than 250,000 people in 12 municipalities.
The Veeam Solution

Yakima County replaced legacy backup with Veeam Availability Suite. Veeam ensures public safety data is available 24.7.365, strengthens the county’s disaster recovery (DR) strategy and saves more than 400 hours plus $100,000 each year.

“Data drives public safety outcomes,” Olson said. “Veeam provides fast, reliable access to data so our 911 dispatchers, first responders and law enforcement officials can respond quickly to an emergency. Without immediate access to data, public safety hangs in the balance.”

Veeam ensures public safety data is available every second of the day by providing dependable and high-speed backup, replication and recovery of the county’s 120 virtual machines (50 TB).

“I don’t lie awake at night worrying backups will fail,” Olson said. “I’m confident our backups will complete successfully and are recoverable, and I know replicas are available for DR if we need them.”

Veeam strengthened the county’s DR strategy by replicating virtual machines off site —something that wasn’t possible with the previous solution because it would have required an additional capital expenditure. Like most U.S. counties, Yakima County operates under a tight budget.

According to a survey conducted by the National Association of Counties in 2016, most county economies have not recovered to pre-recession levels of 2007. Forty-four percent of counties were forced to reduce or eliminate services because of budget constraints.

Olson said counties must be masterful at maximizing their investments, and that exactly what Yakima County did with Veeam.

“Veeam is half the price of legacy backup, which saves $100,000 each year,” he explained. “Other solutions in the Magic Quadrant priced themselves right off the table.”

Olson said savings are invested back into the IT infrastructure to provide more efficient and effective county services. E-payments are a good example. Residents can pay online for services such as property taxes, court fees and dog licenses.

Yakima County also saves time with Veeam.

“Veeam is so reliable and easy to use that it basically manages itself,” Olson said. “We’ll save more than 400 hours in troubleshooting time each year, so we’ll use this time to look at new technology that will automate IT processes and deliver additional value to the county.”

The Results

- **Ensures public safety data is available 24.7.365**
  
  “Veeam delivers on its promise to make our data available around the clock,” Olson said. “I’ve been working in IT for 20 years, and this is one of the few products that does exactly what we ask it to do.”

- **Strengthens the county’s disaster recovery strategy**
  
  Veeam enables Yakima County to do something for the first time: Replicate data to a DR site for quick failover in an emergency.
  
  “Nothing is more important than the safety and security of everyone in our county,” Olson said. “Having an extra copy of our data at a second site helps us protect them.”

- **Saves more than 400 hours and $100,000 each year**
  
  Veeam was 50 percent less expensive than Yakima County’s previous backup solution, which is a welcome cost savings for a local government. Saving 400 hours each year is significant too. Yakima County uses that time to improve IT processes impacting residents.