

# Essex County Fire & Rescue Service Procures Cloud Backup via G-Cloud



Quote: "We spend a huge amount of time analysing the data we collect so that we can target our services in the correct and most efficient way. Knowing that this data is protected by Backup Technology is vital to the success of everything we do." - Paul Hill, Assistant Chief Fire Officer



## Backup Technology customer case study

BTL Helps Essex County Fire & Rescue Protect Its Data

## Industry

Public Sector

## Objective

To provide ECFRS with an upgraded and easy-to-use Cloud Backup solution

## Solution

BTL managed Asigra Public Cloud

## Benefits

- Improvement in operational data strategy
- Shorter timescales for backups
- Improved staff efficiency
- Improved management confidence



Essex County Fire & Rescue Service (ECFRS) is the statutory fire and rescue service for the county of Essex and one of the largest county fire services in the UK, covering 367,000 hectares and a population of more than 1.74 million. It operates 50 fire stations - 12 wholetime, 34 retained, 4 day crewed, plus one USAR station (Urban Search and Rescue) – and employs 820 wholetime and 466 retained firefighters, 46 control staff and 253 support staff. On average its firefighters attend 24,000 emergency incidents each year.



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As well as fighting fires, attending road accidents and dealing with major emergencies, ECFRS is also responsible for preventative community safety work and runs a number of innovative schemes to educate and protect those most vulnerable in the local community.

ECFRS is headquartered in Kelvedon and has a control centre in Hutton plus five training sites across the county. The Service strives for operational excellence through a modernisation agenda and a focus on providing an efficient, effective, value-for-money service.

### Protecting People, Property & Data

While Essex County Fire & Rescue Service protects life, property and the environment, Backup Technology ('BTL') protects all of its data. The data covers risk information for the county, operating procedures, details of the incidents attended, the people helped, building inspections and mobilising data along with all the Finance, HR and workplace data created by the organisation itself.

Over 22 TB of data is protected for the Service across physical and virtual environments. This includes over 75 servers, hosting user and application data with a 1TB Exchange, 1TB of Oracle data and 13TB of Hyper-V and VMware backups. ECFRS utilises a dedicated Asigra Public Cloud vault which stores its off-site data each night in two geographically separate data centres. On-site ECFRS has three dedicated DS-Client appliances to deal with its variation of Oracle and Hyper Visor environments. It also uses the local storage feature within Asigra to ensure it has a copy of the latest generation of data on-site for LAN speed recovery of all its systems.

Paul Hill, Assistant Chief Fire Officer for safer

communities explains, "Saving lives isn't just about putting out fires and attending emergencies, it is about using the data we collect during our work to protect the people and property of our county. We spend a huge amount of time analysing the data we collect so that we can target our services in the correct and most efficient way. Knowing that this data is protected by Backup Technology is vital to the success of everything we do."

ECFRS turned to BTL following a review of the Service's overall IT infrastructure in 2012 which concluded that its existing backup solution had become too difficult to manage and would be almost impossible to upgrade with the existing provider.

Jan Swanwick, Head of ICT for Essex County Fire & Rescue Service, explains, "The backup system we were using was difficult to maintain and took a lot of our technicians' time and effort. To upscale the system would have meant going back and starting all over again and we just didn't have the time to do that."

As a public sector organisation the Service was tasked with procuring a new backup provider through G Cloud, the UK Government's online cloud services marketplace. It was the first time Essex County Fire & Rescue had used G Cloud for procurement purposes.

Jan says, "Traditionally procurement has been a long, protracted process. With G Cloud it is very straightforward because all the supplier and product information has already been collated and validated. This makes the process much easier. It also helped us discover Backup Technology which has been a major benefit."

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service did not just pick Backup Technology off the cuff. Having





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looked at the details of BTL's Asigra-based cloud backup solution ECFRS trialled it and compared it with other options from Symantec and Veeam. Jan Swanwick continues, "We tested a couple of different options but they either affected the reliability of our machines or proved as difficult to maintain as the existing solution. Backup Technology ticked the box for everything, they just excelled. They came and met with us, they totally understood our problems and they gave us huge confidence that they could both backup but more importantly restore our data. The migration itself was completely hassle free and they took full responsibility for any issues that cropped up, for instance we had different versions of Oracle but they resolved the issues this caused for us."

ECFRS had 3 different versions of Oracle, ranging from 9i through to 11g within its Windows environment, which controlled most of its critical system including SAP. After several conversations between BTL and ECFRS, 2 DS-Clients were utilised to ensure there was no performance degradation or conflicts between the Oracle versions. The decision was taken to backup the legacy 9i Oracles by installing the DS-Client software on the target machines and allow Asigra to use the already installed Oracle API's to send the data to the BTL DS-System.

The fully managed solution encompasses every aspect of the backup contract from configuration and installation through to the daily monitoring and restoration support of the backups. BTL's Online Monitoring Portal allows both the dedicated account manager and the ECFRS support staff to react quickly to any backup problems.

There is a close relationship between the ECFRS support team and the BTL account manager which allows any alterations or backup modifications to be processed extremely efficiently. This means that any changes made to the production environment are protected as quickly possible.

Jan Swanwick explains, "We used to keep our backup tapes off-site and needed to have multiple data safes at different locations. Using our previous backup solution caused huge inefficiencies. It would take several hours a week for a technician to change, catalogue and archive the tapes and this had a huge impact on our organisation. Today it's quick and easy and takes a matter of minutes. Backup Technology has given us the ability and confidence to be able to restore any file at any point in time. It's not a backup solution; it's a restore solution, which is exactly what we required."

Rob Mackle, Sales & Services Manager for BTL, says, "Essex County Fire & Rescue Service is founded on the principles of protection, prevention and response. Those are the principles we have adhered to in providing the service with the cloud backup solution that best meets its requirements."

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