

Recovering from Disaster

“These are times which try men’s souls.” said Thomas Paine about the American Revolution. These words came to my mind with infinitely greater meaning recently. My personal life and my professional life were severely impacted by the Louisiana hurricanes of 2005.

On the personal side, my home was flooded. Over a foot of water remained above the floor for more than 24 hours, ruining appliances, walls, and electrical outlets as well as cabinets, closets, vanities and the contents thereof. My workshop, which was on a slab, had about four feet of water, which ruined all of my tools. I and my family remain displaced from our home for the foreseeable future. There is much repair to be done. Even so, we are among the lucky ones. We saved the irreplaceable possessions, such as family pictures. We have flood insurance. We have a comfortable place to stay while our home is repaired. Many of our friends and neighbors fared much worse.

On the professional side, there was extensive damage to schools in our parish. There were students doubly displaced, from both hurricanes. Students were coming in, then students were leaving, and they all had to be tracked. Naturally, nothing existed in our Student Information System to do so. This had not ever happened before. I was astonished by how quickly Edgear, our SIS vendor, ramped up their system, JPAMS, to provide not only the tracking codes, but associated reports and audits to make the whole experience easier. Additional new programming was added to facilitate dropping all students in a devastated school on their last date of attendance prior to the hurricane (using the new hurricane drop code provided by the State Department of Education) and reenter the students on their first date of return following the hurricane (using the hurricane entry code). In our case it was necessary to split a school, sending more than 200 students to another school. Programming was added to do this, pulling all attendance, discipline and grading records for the student to the new school.

All of this could have been done within the regular JPAMS system. The ability to drop and reenter students existed. The ability to move students from one school to another existed. But it would have been a very tedious and time consuming task for school secretaries and counselors to accomplish this manually, student by student. Many of these school secretaries and counselors were suffering their own personal losses, while trying to aid and comfort the students in their schools. Thank you, Edgear, for caring. Thank you for the hard work and extra hours put in by the programming staff to accomplish so much in so little time. Thanks to the management for making an investment in humanity, in the spirit of true charity, without expectation of financial reward.

Lastly, a personal expression of gratitude to everyone at Edgear who called all over north Louisiana to find lodging for my family when we needed to evacuate. And a special thanks to the family who took us into their home when no other lodging could be found. The competence and compassion of the Edgear family has helped to make recovery possible — in my professional life, and in my personal life.

Thank You
Russ Adams



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