A Customer Success
from the Experts in
Business-Critical Continuity™

Southern Farm Bureau Casualty Insurance Company

Established more than 50 years ago, Southern Farm Bureau Casualty Insurance Company (SFBCIC) is a regional property and casualty insurance company operating in Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Texas. Headquartered in Jackson, Miss., SFBCIC is one of the 50 largest property and casualty insurance companies in the nation.

Background

SFBCIC provides property and casualty insurance across seven states that historically have been vulnerable to severe weather. These conditions make continuous operation of mission-critical technology a challenge, but also a necessity as the company increases its dependence on technology to support agents and customers. The company has relied on Emerson Network Power's Liebert technology to support high availability of IT systems for more than 20 years. When it came time to expand the corporate data center, SFBCIC again turned to Emerson Network Power.

Case Summary

Location: Jackson, Mississippi

Products/Services:

- Liebert Npower UPS
- Liebert PPC Precision Power Centers
- Liebert Deluxe Precision Air Conditioners

Critical Needs: Support business continuity goals for large regional property and casualty insurance company through high availability power and cooling support for main data center and network of regional facilities.

Results

- Ultra-reliable performance of mission-critical power and cooling through frequent commercial power outages and severe weather.
- Only a single unplanned outage in more than 15 years of continuous operation.
- System architecture leverages existing investments and provides flexibility to scale with changes in business needs.

Liebert®

EMERSON™
Network Power

The Situation

Today's insurance industry faces challenges posed by the deregulation, consolidation, and convergence of financial services, as well as the continued requirement of servicing policyholders affected by natural disasters. SFBCIC is moving beyond traditional business models and processes to expand services and improve financial strength. Effective use of technology is essential to this strategy.

"Information technology has become key to competing in an increasingly complex business environment," says Kenneth McCardle, vice president of Information Technology for SFBCIC. "Even underwriting a simple policy requires massive computing power to perform complicated calculations based on credit scores, past claims history, actuarial factors and underwriting that particular risk."

This increasing reliance on IT has made system availability and flexibility critical to business continuity. "If your computers aren't up and functioning, you can't quote a rate, you can't write business, you can't verify policy coverage, and ultimately you can't serve your customers," McCardle says. "We just can't afford for our computers to go down."

SFBCIC has claims service centers and branch offices throughout a seven state region to support agents and customers. Initially, each branch office was equipped with a mainframe computer to process policies and maintain regional records.

After the company moved into new corporate offices in Jackson, Miss., it conducted a thorough assessment of its existing critical infrastructure to prepare for future technology requirements and anticipated business growth. The company invested in new enterprise-wide technologies housed in the corporate data center and consolidated some applications, which had been supported by the regional mainframes, at the corporate data center. As a result of these and other changes, the company decided to add 5,000 square feet of raised floor space adjacent to its existing 4,000-square-foot corporate data center. During the last several years, server-based distributed networks have evolved utilizing the raised-floor space previously occupied by the regional mainframes.

"No matter how good our computers are, they can't operate without power and cooling. Our existing Liebert equipment had an extremely reliable performance record, so when it came time to expand, Liebert was our choice."

Kenneth McCardle, vice president of Information Technology, Southern Farm Bureau Casualty Insurance Company

The Solution

As part of the planning processes for the expanded data center space, SFBCIC called on the Benton Ballard Company, its local Liebert Representative, for help in determining power protection and precision cooling requirements for the new facility.

"No matter how good our computers are, they can't operate without power and cooling," McCardle says. "Our existing Liebert equipment had an extremely reliable performance record, so when it came time to expand, Liebert was our choice."

The company's large IBM mainframe, which supports centralized processing of all business and claims activity, was moved to the new space. The mainframe is capable of processing 1,058 MIPS and handles all major underwriting and claims processes for the regional offices. The expansion also houses storage drives and other mainframe support services. The existing space was reconfigured to support a production data center, a test lab for large-scale implementations of new software, an IT training center, a command center for data center staff, and a conference room with a large video screen and surround sound to support videoconferencing and training.

An 80 kVA Liebert Npower UPS was selected to provide the additional power protection capacity required by the expansion. This dependable, mid-sized UPS uses online double-conversion technology to protect against the full spectrum of input and output power disturbances. It is configured with 30 to 40 minutes of battery backup power and is connected to a 500 kW generator. A pair of Liebert PPC Precision Power Centers provides grounding, custom electrical distribution and expansion capabilities.

Additional Liebert Deluxe precision cooling units were also added to handle the increased heat load created by newer, higher-density servers. The 9,000-square-foot facility is now supported by 10 Liebert Deluxe precision cooling units providing a combined 34 tons of cooling capacity.

To reduce noise and improve energy efficiency, the bureau chose the flexible alternative of installing its mainframe, storage drives and much of the power and cooling equipment in separate rooms on the raised floor. These "lights-out" areas are maintained at manufacturer's specified temperatures.

The front of the data center is a command center that provides a quiet, attractive working environment. Although on the raised floor, it is maintained at a comfortable temperature for information technology employees.

"We save money and improve productivity by tailoring each environment to its purpose," McCardle says. "The command center looks almost like any nice office—well decorated, with trees in the offices and pictures on the walls. It is well lit but warmer than the lights-out areas, which only need lighting during equipment maintenance."

The expanded corporate data center serves as a hub for seven regional data centers that are required to support processes specific to each state in which the company operates. The main data center connects to the state offices through T1 lines, frame relay and multiple protocol label switching (MPLS). In Mississippi, the state and corporate offices are only two miles apart. All corporate information is backed up on tape, which is duplicated at the state corporate office as part of business continuity planning. The company is also installing disk replication solutions, providing

replication of data between the corporate office and the regional data centers for business continuity.

Most of these regional facilities also rely on Liebert power and cooling.

"In some locations where we inherited another manufacturer's equipment, our plan is to eventually convert these over to Liebert as equipment becomes obsolescent," McCardle says.

The Results

SFBCIC has conservative availability goals of 99.9 percent for its mainframe and 99 percent for its distributed servers. Its Liebert power and cooling architecture has helped it meet these availability goals for more than 15 years without redundant configurations.

"Since we moved into our corporate headquarters in 1991, we've had only a single unplanned outage—and that was during Hurricane Katrina," McCardle says.

As the hurricane approached Jackson, commercial power flickered on and off. Without time to charge between outages, the batteries drained after a few hours and could no longer support the switch to generator power, resulting in a brief loss of power.

"That experience actually taught us a valuable lesson," he says. "We've changed our protocols so that we now switch directly to generator power and stay there if we begin to experience frequent outages in a short duration."

McCardle sees parallels between the insurance business and the Liebert equipment that protects SFBCIC's mission-critical assets. "You buy insurance for protection against unlikely but costly events. Most of the time, those events don't happen. But it's imperative that your insurance company has rock-solid stability and reliability to help you when you need it.

"That's one of the big reasons we depend on Liebert technology and service—they are like an insurance policy that helps us make good on our commitments to our policyholders."

The high reliability and flexibility of Liebert equipment has also provided a strong return throughout the years on the company's investment in its power and cooling infrastructure. "We have some equipment that's 20 to 30 years old, and it functions perfectly. I can't think of anything else in the data center that lasts nearly as long."

For more information on Liebert technology, visit **www.Liebert.com**.