

SARS FIRE REMINDS ALL BUSINESSES NOT TO LET RECORDS GO UP IN SMOKE

14 February 2012: Millions of rands worth of property, equipment and documents are thought to have been destroyed during the massive fire that engulfed the three storey building containing the South African Revenue Services' Durban headquarters and two international call centres over the weekend, highlighting the importance for all businesses to ensure they have effective document management systems to avoid the costs of losing critical company information.

This is according to Brad Dallas, General Manager of Metrofile Records Management Durban, a division of Metrofile Holdings Limited which is listed under the services sector on the JSE, who says failure to securely store and back-up critical company data and records means a company has to rebuild its database from scratch in the event of it being destroyed by a fire. "Reconstituting company information and data could take months, or even years, which can have a potentially devastating impact on a business by delaying, hindering or even permanently ceasing productivity."

Statistics from the UK reveal that 30% of all businesses that suffer from a major fire go out of business within a year, and 70% fail within five years, due to data loss, according to Home Office Computing Magazine.

"Fire poses one of the biggest threats to any organisation that deals with documents on a daily basis – especially the retail, financial, telecommunications and medical sectors – and businesses need to incorporate effective risk management programmes to protect these assets accordingly," says Dallas.

He says that should a company have no data storage and recovery plan in place the potential business repercussions include, among others, financial losses, damage to brand reputation, costly litigation, job losses and total business inoperability. "Data is unquantifiable and therefore extremely difficult to insure, making it impossible to recover any financial losses.

"Businesses have two options; onsite or offsite records management. Companies that need immediate access to documents and records have no choice but to store them onsite, the key lies in implementing an effective back-up solution and storing the documents in a secure environment that can protect the records from damp, fire and water damage as well as insect infestation. Essential to this solution is effective fire detection systems."

Dallas says offsite records management is becoming increasingly popular due to space constraints of storing records onsite as well as the costs involved with implementing the effective security measures needed to securely store records, including fire detection and prevention.



“Offsite records management entails the storage of company data and information in purpose-built facilities incorporating data protection which involves the securing of a backup data tape in an off-site vault. The location of storage facilities are specifically situated in low-risk areas where exposure to flooding, fires, earthquakes, flight paths or other natural disasters are least probable.”

Dallas says that a combination of both physical and online data backup provides the most comprehensive backup storage system. “The online disaster recovery site continuously mirrors the information stored to the records management storage system to avoid loss of data due to data corruption.

“Closure as a result of loss or damage to company data and information is becoming increasingly prevalent, yet this risk is so easily mitigated,” concludes Dallas.

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About Metrofile

Metrofile is the market leader in information and records storage management in Africa and is represented in all the major provinces of South Africa. Metrofile operates from 26 facilities covering more than 73 000m² of warehousing space and manages more than 21 billion records on behalf of its customers.

Services include in and outsourced solutions to help business and government to increase their operating efficiency and meet their legislative and corporate governance requirements. These services comprise file plan development, training in all aspects of records management, the supply of files, active file management (on and off-site), archival of records (on and off-site), image processing, data protection, backup management, paper management and confidential records destruction. Metrofile also supplies and maintains a wide range of business equipment including scanners, library security systems, mailing and packaging machines.

Metrofile has been listed on the JSE Limited (“JSE”) since 1995 and its ordinary shares are quoted in the Support Services sector of the JSE. Its largest shareholder is its empowerment partner, Mineworkers Investment Company (Pty) Limited (“MIC”), which owns 32,9% of Metrofile’s equity. Visit www.metrofile for more information.