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Off-site Archiving ... Complete with Peace-of-Mind

Out-of-sight and out-of-mind may be a good philosophy in some situations—but not for the management of a digital radiology department. Just ask Marjorie J. Parsons, BS, RT, CRT, Director of Imaging Services for Downey Regional Medical Center in Southern California. As a key force behind the hospital’s recent conversion to full digital radiology workflow, the experienced radiology administrator should know. With an advanced PACS from DR Systems and software and state-of-the-art disaster recovery (DR) systems from InSite One, the leading managed storage and archiving service provider, the implementation was based on a well-conceived plan that took nothing for granted including the security of the department’s image storage and disaster recovery needs.

Downey Regional Medical Center Downey, CA



A 199-bed community hospital with comprehensive medical services, Downey manages over 90,000 exams each year in a full range of state-of-the-art modalities including CT, MRI, nuclear medicine, ultrasound, interventional radiology, PET and more. These procedures provide accurate diagnoses for in-patient, emergency room and outpatient populations. The hospital has a long and proud history in the community and prides itself on its advanced technology.

“As part of our new PACS, we installed an 8TB on-site archive for day-to-day exam storage,” comments Parsons. “This hardware was selected with the help of our PACS vendor DR Systems and was installed as part of the system. It holds about two year’s worth of exams.”

But according to Parsons, disaster recovery was an important part of the PACS project. The hospital PACS team clearly recognized the importance of comprehensive back up storage with archiving needs that extend well beyond HIPAA compliance and protection against data loss. “We also wanted complete business continuity to keep the department functioning in the event of a disaster without missing a beat,” she said.

“The hospital needed to examine a full range of off-site archiving options to find the most comprehensive solution.”

Downey considered purchasing and installing its own on-site back up archive and had sufficient in-house IT staff to support it. For more thorough data protection, they also looked at implementing storage in a leased off-site facility. However, this would have necessitated that Downey IT staff manage a system in a remote location, which would have been difficult and might have meant that the archive would receive less-than-desirable time and attention. That was just the type of out-of-sight and out-of-mind strategy Parsons wished to avoid. However, at the same time, the hospital sought the benefits of off-site archiving for protecting data in the event of a natural disaster.

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The third alternative examined was a managed archive service provider, offering off-site storage and disaster recovery.

As a member of the MedAssets group purchasing organization (GPO), Downey had been introduced to archiving leader InSite One when Parsons attended a GPO meeting some months prior to launching the disaster recovery search. Among InSite One's wide range of flexible services was a comprehensive option, InDex® NearLine, that would enable Downey to send its images automatically to InSite One's advanced off-site storage facilities.

Utilizing this service, images would be transmitted rapidly and seamlessly through secure digital connections to the primary InSite One storage facility in Connecticut. After arriving in Connecticut they would be mirrored to a second storage facility in Arizona for an added level of protection.

In addition to offering real-time data back-up, the InSite One system also would provide immediate access to this archived data in the event of on-site system failure, enabling the business continuity Parsons sought.

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InSite One's expert staff were on-site at Downey to oversee the technology installation, and it was completed in a single day. Currently, an InSite One proxy server sits right next to Downey's PACS archive to automate data transmission to the secure InSite One archives. These archives are carefully maintained by InSite One's expert staff and Downey's IT staff monitors the proxy server daily as part of their routine Q/C checks.

Along with Downey's desired managed archive service provider model, Parsons found that InSite One provided a range of additional benefits. Its reasonable application service provider (ASP) fee-per-study pricing structure shifts the expense of disaster recovery from capital equipment to an operating budget. Moreover, with a single fee for the life of the study, archiving costs are reasonable and predictable. An added bonus--as a MedAssets participant, the hospital enjoyed a substantial discount off of standard pricing.

Parsons also liked the solution because it removes concerns about technology obsolescence and scalability. "I did some research and found that InSite One upgrades its technology on an ongoing basis," she said. "That means we don't need a crystal ball to predict our future exam volume in order to purchase appropriate archiving hardware or to risk outgrowing it quickly. This also frees us from the expense and time of keeping our storage system current as technologies change. InSite One just made so much sense for Downey Regional Medical Center."

Today, as a busy radiology department administrator, Marjorie Parsons is always sure their disaster recovery solution is functioning flawlessly with InSite One's professionally managed off-site disaster recovery storage and archiving. For Parsons, that's important peace-of-mind.