

CASE STUDY



Qualcomm

Qualcomm, a world-renowned leader in wireless innovation, changed the face of wireless communications by introducing Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) technology in 1989. This advanced technology, plus the company's broad range of innovative chipsets and mobile solutions, power today's next-generation 3G networks.

As a global company with more than 12,800 employees worldwide and traded on the NASDAQ stock exchange, Qualcomm has precise business goals that are designed to meet the expectations of customers, investors, and shareholders. To meet these goals, the company must have an effective business continuity plan that keeps the business running under any situation—even a natural disaster.

Key challenges.

Based in San Diego, California, Qualcomm had to interrupt operations during the 2007 wildfires that destroyed more than 1,500 homes. The company closed its corporate office for three days so employees could concentrate on safeguarding their families and homes. While employees concentrated on their home fronts, a select group from Qualcomm set up a command center to communicate with employees and to ensure that business operations continued running smoothly.

"The interesting thing about emergencies is that they rarely hit during office hours," said Carey Storm, director of operations at Qualcomm. "They usually hit on weekends or late at night. We have to be ready at all times."

To ensure that Qualcomm could continue doing business, the company had already established a comprehensive emergency response plan that was set into motion by the command center team. A reliable wireless network that employees could access 24/7 played a major role in the company's disaster recovery.

"Wireless accessibility is a big part of our business continuity," said Storm. "Critical employees are encouraged to have PC wireless cards so they have access to corporate applications and communications in case we lose the ability to be in our office."

Solution.

The Qualcomm workplace environment is extremely mobile, with many employees telecommuting and working from home during the evening and on weekends. More than a quarter of Qualcomm's U.S. employees have notebooks equipped with Verizon Wireless PC Cards, or smartphones that allow them to access the Verizon Wireless Mobile Broadband network and connect to the Qualcomm remote-access servers.

Using the PC Cards to connect to the network is painless for Qualcomm employees. They have been trained to access the corporate network wirelessly, and it is a familiar part of their daily routine. "It's a standard operating procedure for us. It's how we do business," said Storm.

While the Verizon Wireless Mobile Broadband network is used almost daily by much of Qualcomm, it became the primary communications network for a number of employees during the wildfires.

QUALCOMM

Company description:

Qualcomm is a leader in developing and delivering innovative digital wireless communications products and services based on CDMA and other advanced technologies. Headquartered in San Diego, Qualcomm employs more than 12,800 people worldwide. The company is included in the S&P 100 Index and is a 2008 Fortune 500 company.

Objective:

- Needed a way to recover quickly and continue doing business without interruption during natural disasters.
- Needed the ability to easily transfer to a reliable wireless network and continue day-to-day business activities when a wired network is unavailable.
- Wanted to promote and support a highly mobile culture by providing employees with mobile phones, wireless-enabled notebooks, and smartphones.



Results.

"The biggest concern during these events is that the wireless network will be overtaxed and crash," said Storm. "If that happens, there goes the first level of our business continuity plan. We had no issues with the Verizon Wireless network."

During the fires, Qualcomm employees logged in to the remote-access server about three thousand times each day. "The Verizon Wireless network was always available, and we had no problems," said Mark Sievers, senior director of IT. "The network was never saturated or unavailable. It was highly effective."

The hardworking employees were able to continue business as usual while the Qualcomm offices were closed. "We didn't miss a beat in making all our usual office applications available," said Brian Baker, vice president of IT. "We have almost two thousand applications, and employees were able to access the critical applications they needed to do their jobs."

Business continuity is critical for a global company like Qualcomm. If business activity had halted during the firestorm, the financial repercussions could have been severe. "We must maintain our systems and keep operations running," said Baker. "Our financial systems, chip design, and everything we need to run the business stayed in production because we could keep those systems running via remote access and Verizon Wireless."

Without an effective disaster recovery plan, certain units of the business would have stopped working and productivity would have been lost, explains Sievers. "If we were not able to manage those critical systems, it would have been disastrous. We have to make our bottom line and go to market on schedule."

Qualcomm also volunteered its technical savvy to help the broader community by maintaining and upgrading the county information service site, www.211sandiego.org. Key members of the Qualcomm IT team worked together with other local technicians to upgrade the Web site and the call center so it could manage the huge influx of requests for information during the disaster.

The Qualcomm team relied heavily on the Verizon Wireless network to update the site's Web pages as well as administer and configure the site. "We created a static Web page for the site, updated the Web servers, and coordinated email and chat rooms over the Verizon Wireless EV-DO network," said Edward Nichols, IT security engineer.

Throughout this critical time period, wireless connectivity proved its worth again and again. "Wireless access paid for itself easily," said Baker. "Even before the disaster, we realized that wireless pays for itself. After the disaster we saw clearly how valuable it was to the business, and it blew away any concern about ROI."

Sievers added, "The wireless network paid for itself in normal operations. In times of disaster, it's icing on the cake."

Solution:

Qualcomm gave employees wireless-enabled notebooks running on the Verizon Wireless broadband network for high-speed, "always on" data access. Whether on the road or working from home—or during times of disaster—employees now have reliable access to the Internet, email, and corporate applications.

Results:

- Enabled the company to continue global operations even when headquarters shut down during the wildfires in 2007.
- Consistently met schedules and delivered products to market on time during a crisis.
- Created a command center and issued critical messages to employees' mobile devices while maintaining important business systems.

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