



By Patrice Innocenti  
Member North Jersey Media  
Group and Former MSNBC Reporter

# Moving Out Your Records for Greater Efficiency

**M**unicipalities are responsible for the increasingly overwhelming task of managing town records. As if keeping track of old and new documents for city health, education, tax, police and other departments were not enough, local governments are also responsible for protecting the personal information of its residents in a time of hackers and identity theft. Overcrowded storage rooms, collapsing stacks of file boxes and long waits for document retrieval have become commonplace. In the Borough of North Arlington one man decided to do something about it. Business Administrator and Municipal Clerk Terence M. Wall found an alternative way to modernize the system and increase efficiencies.

The first step toward corrective action was admitting there was a problem. Wall explained how there were, "boxes and files in many areas of the building with a serious need for organization and protection." He knew that boxed files sitting throughout offices were a thing of the past and better organizational technologies existed. But, he admitted, improving operations was not the

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only concern, security was a major consideration. He visited several different record storage facilities and located what he believes to be the most comprehensive and secure service in Oakland.

FileBank, an off-site data security service, offered the Borough of North Arlington the answer to their record storage. The company sent representatives to pack, label and move documents into new archive boxes. The professional storage boxes were bar-coded, added into their system and delivered to the company's archive center in

Oakland. Inactive files were then inventoried and archived, semi-active files were stored in the same manner or converted to an electronic file cabinet along with current files so they could be easily accessed by the appropriate Borough departments.

Under the new security arrangements, records would be kept in a climate controlled vault with 24/7 monitoring and motion sensing equipment. Access to the stored data over the internet is user and password protected with 128 bit encryption. As a back-up, all paper originals were also catalogued and archived. The company also identified obsolete documents and requested destruction from NJDARM and provided certified destruction after approvals.

Following the move, borough officials had a new sense of relief that all the data critical to operations were safe from fires, flooding, power failure, theft or unauthorized access. In a short time, the result of Terence M. Wall's effort to move to an off-site document service began to pay off. Employees started to

have more time to focus on specific tasks rather than spend a lot of time searching for paperwork. There was also noticeably less clutter around the building. "Ease of access and better organization means greater operational efficiency and a more productive work environment," Wall said, "This also reduces costs."

Other advantages to an off-site location make it possible for any authorized person to access borough records from anywhere in the world using the internet. This could have its advantages for people working at home or traveling. If local officials wanted to travel with a wireless card in their laptop, they could virtually have their office at their fingertips. But remember, the service does not entirely rule out keeping required paperwork on hand.


Potential drawbacks could be access to information in an emergency where internet or phone service is interrupted. Municipalities should also remember that they can not have enough redundancy. Regardless of how secure your off-

site data facility may seem, it may be a good thing to consider who is backing up their facility as redundant protection to your critical information. There is secure and then there is safe and secure.

Is off-site data management the way of the future for municipal governments? in Walls opinion, "It should be considered because the retention of government records is not only the law, it is truly important." As Business Administrator and Municipal Clerk for the Borough of North Arlington, he thought it was important enough to locate a service provider, move all the borough's documents and give it a try. It seems to be working for them.

There are a number of off-site data storage facilities who can manage records for a municipal operation. Take the Terrance M. Wall approach and arrange to visit them. Finding one that will work well with your municipal operations will only cost a little effort in the short term but the gains can be well worth it. ▲

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