



SUCCESS STORY
Service Provider



GREENVILLE UTILITIES | PROBLEM SOLVED

To provide safe, innovative, and sustainable utility solutions that serve as the foundation of growth for the Greenville region, Greenville Utilities relies on NetApp to support the applications critical to its operations.

Raising the Bar on Operational Efficiency for a North Carolina Utility Service

Greenville Utilities is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for those served by safely providing reliable utility solutions at the lowest reasonable cost, with exceptional customer service, in an environmentally responsible manner. Without those basic utility services such as water and electricity, any modern society would grind to a halt. To provide these services, the company relies on 24/7 data availability. Access to these datasets helps to keep services running, repair issues quickly, and ensure that residents in and around Greenville, North Carolina, have access to their accounts.

Another NetApp solution delivered by:



Serves
150,000 customers

Creates
instant short-term clones
of systems necessary for testing upgrades and patches

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Todd Cannon
Senior server and security analyst, Greenville Utilities

SUPERIOR SERVICE AT COMPETITIVE RATES

Greenville is optimizing its operations and reducing costs—passing along savings to customers—by employing a suite of tier 1 enterprise applications from Oracle to streamline and automate back office and customer-facing processes. These processes rely on the continual availability of vast amounts of operational and financial data throughout the organization.

“From billing to customer service to asset management to organizing workers who ensure that our utilities operate smoothly, our entire organization relies on applications that house data,” explains Todd Cannon, senior server and security analyst at Greenville Utilities.

Because all of Greenville Utilities’ integrated applications operate in real time, corrupted or inaccessible data could significantly affect the organization’s ability to respond to operational challenges.

Greenville Utilities relies on a FlexPod® solution to optimize operations and more effectively serve customers. FlexPod ensures that

employees have fast, uninterrupted access to critical information by more quickly managing backup for its enterprise application data. This includes financial information, customer information, transactional information for field work and asset management, and business-related files. “Everything we have from an enterprise application standpoint rides on NetApp, which it is essential for helping us serve our customers faster,” says Cannon.

The validated FlexPod design and proven reliability give Greenville the agility necessary to support seven critical, integrated systems that operate in real time. This means Cannon doesn’t need to worry about performance at any hour of the night. FlexPod keeps Greenville’s operations running for the community it serves.

EVOLVING SYSTEMS, UNINTERRUPTED

To maintain system security and currency while seamlessly improving services, Greenville is constantly performing patches or updates. Doing so without interfering with the running systems is necessary so customers can access

the information they need and Greenville’s business can continue uninterrupted.

Business and systems analysts need copies of the production data to run their tests. And they require a system exactly like the one servicing customers, cloning data at the same time so no transactions are missed because of a time delay. NetApp® SnapMirror® and FlexClone® support both of those needs by enabling Greenville Utilities’ applications to make copies of all eight systems at

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Keeps enterprise systems running smoothly by making operational and financial data available 24/7.
- Ensures immediate response to time-sensitive matters by enabling integrated applications to maintain real-time operation and continual access to data.
- Eliminates disruptions to customers and business users during updates and patches.
- Minimizes data loss in the event of a system outage; reducing 8 to 12 hours’ worth of lost data to less than an hour.
- Accelerates disaster recovery time by enabling DR systems to take over operations quickly.

once in seconds. The copy is exactly like the one serving customers, so IT can apply the patch, run tests, and make adjustments.

Previously, making those copies took a week. "With NetApp, we can now update the patches during a two-hour period using a process that's currently 90% automated. The speed of moving patches into production improves IT efficiency and minimizes downtime customers may experience due to patching," says Cannon.

RESPONDING TO CUSTOMERS FASTER

Greenville uses NetApp as part of its overall disaster recovery (DR) strategy to maintain service to customers in the face of potential downtime and outages. It deploys NetApp at both its main data center and its disaster recovery facility, where it stores backups offsite. NetApp SnapMirror replicates the

data between the two locations. Using NetApp, the IT organization can take any dataset in its main facility and replicate that to its disaster facility in an hour, rather than the 8 to 12 hours it would have taken previously. Faster replication means that if the primary system goes down, Greenville can better serve its customers by minimizing any potential data loss.

NetApp solutions enable rapid recovery as well. In the case of its customer-facing web portal, an error in the Oracle database made the system go dark for 24 hours. This portal is essential for customers to pay their bills, request additional services, start or stop their current services, or ask for extensions, so downtime is not acceptable. Although the IT team couldn't diagnose the problem immediately, it saw that its DR environment was running properly, so it used SnapMirror and FlexClone to bring

up a cloned system so customers wouldn't be affected.

IT was able to make that switch in 40 minutes. After that, it took another 72 hours to fix the problem with the production system. In the meantime, the utility served customers out of its DR facility. Without NetApp, it could have taken up to a day and a half to give customers access to the DR system. Says Cotton, "NetApp has given us a lot of confidence in our ability to restore from a disaster perspective, which gives our customers confidence that we can provide their essential services, no matter what happens."

SOLUTION COMPONENTS

NETAPP PRODUCTS

FlexPod

NetApp SnapMirror

NetApp FlexClone

LEARN MORE

netapp.com/us/products/converged-systems/flexpod-converged-infrastructure.aspx

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