

# \$34 million in ransom NOT PAID by the City of Sarasota thanks to cybersecurity strategy powered by Veeam



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— Herminio Rodriguez  
Information Technology Director  
City of Sarasota

## The Business Challenge

Sometimes it takes a crisis to demonstrate the power of city services, and no city knows this better than Sarasota. A coastal community on the Gulf of Mexico, Sarasota is vulnerable to hurricanes and flooding, and like most municipalities, it’s also vulnerable to ransomware attacks. To guarantee residents have uninterrupted access to city services, Sarasota created a digital component for nearly every service and modernized data protection in a facility that can withstand a Category 5 storm.

Sarasota offers many digital services. They include utility bill payment, permit applications, a domestic partner registry, crime mapping and an emergency management website that helps residents prepare for, respond to and recover from hazardous weather.

“Our job is to help keep city services running all the time, particularly in the event of a crisis,” said Herminio Rodriguez, Information Technology Director for the City of Sarasota. “We were using a product that was unable to meet the city’s data integrity needs in any way, shape or form because it began to fail, putting city services in jeopardy.”

After spending three days on the phone with the backup vendor, Rodriguez said he and his team downloaded a free trial of Veeam® Availability Suite®. Within 30 minutes they configured Veeam (he said it’s intuitive and easy to use) and began the first of many reliable backup jobs.

### Industry

Government

### Organization



Distinguished by U.S. News & World Report as one of the 10 Best Places to Live in the United States, the City of Sarasota is a diverse and inclusive community located on the Gulf Coast of Florida. The city has approximately 56,000

"We started using Veeam to keep city services running and support digital transformation of future services, but Veeam's true test came a year later when cybercriminals attempted an attack on our city," Rodriguez said. "They encrypted three file servers supporting city services and demanded \$34 million in Bitcoin. Rather than risk city services, we recovered our file servers with Veeam. Not one service or resident was impacted, and we avoided paying ransom. If we hadn't been able to recover our servers, we would have had massive data loss affecting all facets of the city, and ultimately it would have impacted our residents."

Soon Sarasota tapped Veeam for additional ransomware protection. The IT team began sending backups to Microsoft Azure and immutable backups to isolated, hardened Linux repositories. The team also deployed Veeam Backup for Microsoft 365 to protect employees' collaborative data — not only for ransomware recovery but also to support compliance with the state's Public Records Act.

## The Veeam Solution

Veeam helps Sarasota guarantee city services are available to residents and employees nonstop. Veeam fortifies cybersecurity plans and ensures business continuity for the first time in city history. Veeam also supports data integrity requirements and compliance with Florida's Public Records Act.

Sarasota is a forward-thinking city regarding modern data protection. Sarasota aligned Veeam backup with cyber preparedness to ensure swift and efficient response to ransomware attacks (and avoid paying ransom). The city's IT team knows that people, process and technology are the triad for a solid [cybersecurity strategy](#).

"Veeam has changed our city for the better because backup has become a key component of our incident response strategy," Rodriguez said. "We know of another city that didn't have an incident response strategy and suffered a terrible ransomware attack. City services were down for 35 days, which was crippling. There's great comfort knowing that if we experience any type of crisis, Veeam is our way forward."

One way forward begins with the 3-2-1-1-0 Rule (3 different copies of data on 2 different media with 1 copy offsite and 1 copy that is air-gapped, immutable or offline and 0 backup recovery errors). Veeam backs up the city's 60 TB across 150 VMware vSphere virtual machines (VMs) and 12 physical machines on-premises and off-premises via tape and cloud. Some backups are immutable and some are air-gapped. To ensure zero recovery errors, Veeam SureBackup® verifies the recoverability of backups and Instant VM Recovery® recovers from them in minutes.

"SureBackup and Instant VM Recovery are phenomenal features," Rodriguez said. "Knowing every backup is restorable and can be restored in minutes is priceless. Both features help simplify proof of data compliance during annual audits too."

Rodriguez said Veeam Backup for Microsoft 365 also simplifies proof of data compliance, and it supports compliance with the Public Records Act.

residents and is known for beautiful beaches, stunning sunsets and internationally recognized cultural arts venues. Incorporated in 1902, Sarasota is a place where urban amenities meet small-town living.

### Challenge

As if hurricanes and flooding weren't enough, Sarasota also worries about ransomware attacks. When the legacy backup solution no longer met the city's data integrity needs and put city services at risk, Sarasota's IT team replaced it with Veeam.

### Solution

- Veeam Availability Suite
- Veeam Backup for Microsoft 365

### Results

- Sidesteps disaster to provide uninterrupted services to residents
- Guarantees business continuity for the first time in the city's history
- Supports data integrity requirements and compliance with the Public Records Act

"Complying with this Act means we must be able to retrieve Microsoft 365 data from several months or possibly several years ago," Rodriguez said. "Retrieving items like Microsoft Outlook calendars and emails for compliance purposes would be difficult if we didn't back up with Veeam."

Veeam backs up the city's 22 TBs (Microsoft 365 files, documents and mailboxes used by 1,200 people) on-premises. Veeam Explorers™ for Microsoft Exchange Online, SharePoint Online, OneDrive for Business and Microsoft Teams restore items quickly – further improving their ability to recover from ransomware.

"We have full faith in Veeam and our ability to recover in a crisis," Rodriguez said.

## The Results

- **Sidesteps disaster to provide uninterrupted services to residents**  
"By aligning Veeam backup with our incident response strategy, we can respond fast to a ransomware attack," Rodriguez said. "Instead of paying an outrageous ransom that no city could afford, we simply recover data from backups."
- **Guarantees business continuity for the first time in the city's history**  
"It's a great feeling being able to tell city commissioners that business continuity is absolute," Rodriguez said. "We finally found a solution that meets the city's data integrity needs. Veeam will be part of the city's lifeblood for the foreseeable future."
- **Supports data integrity requirements and compliance with the Public Records Act**  
In addition to being the only solution that meets Sarasota's data integrity needs, Veeam supports compliance with Florida's Public Records Act. Veeam Availability Suite verifies backup recoverability (SureBackup) and recovers quickly (Instant VM Recovery). Veeam Backup for Microsoft 365 provides mailbox protection reports to ensure mailboxes are backed up successfully, and Veeam Explorers recover items like calendars and emails in minutes.

### About Veeam Software

Veeam® is the leader in backup, recovery and data management solutions that deliver Modern Data Protection. The company provides a single platform for Cloud, Virtual, Physical, SaaS and Kubernetes environments. Veeam customers are confident their apps and data are protected and always available with the most simple, flexible, reliable and powerful platform in the industry. Veeam protects over 400,000 customers worldwide, including 81% of the Fortune 500 and 69% of the Global 2,000. Veeam's global ecosystem includes 35,000+ technology partners, resellers and service providers, and alliance partners and has offices in more than 30 countries. To learn more, visit [www.veeam.com](http://www.veeam.com) or follow Veeam on LinkedIn [@veeam-software](https://www.linkedin.com/company/veeam) and Twitter [@veeam](https://twitter.com/veeam).



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