

WHATSUP GOLD PASSES THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION'S INSPECTION

Case study

Company:

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)

Industry:

Government

Business challenge:

The NRC's Regional Information Resources Branch needs to know if one of 16 remote U.S. sites is down before they do.

Outcome:

The NRC chose WhatsUp Gold to ensure fast, accurate notification and internal network communication among sites.



The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) was formed in 1975 to regulate the various uses of nuclear energy, including nuclear power plants. Headquartered in Rockville, Maryland, the NRC has three principal regulatory functions: (1) establish standards and regulations; (2) issue licenses for nuclear facilities and users of nuclear materials; and (3) inspect facilities and users of nuclear materials to ensure compliance with the requirements. The NRC staff numbers approximately 3,000 with a budget of about \$500 million.

Fuel fabrication, production, and enrichment facilities are regulated by the NRC, and because they handle extremely hazardous material, these facilities must take special precautions to prevent theft, diversion by terrorists, and dangerous nuclear material exposures by workers and the public. As one might imagine, being able to communicate issues quickly and accurately is paramount.

"The NRC's offices at nuclear power plants need to communicate with the regional staff, particularly if a problem occurs at the plant. If the connection is down, communication becomes much more difficult," says Thomas Magee, Regional Network Manager. "We needed something that would tell us what's going on with the server."

"..the SQL server we use to monitor incident response in the event of a nuclear event went down...If we didn't resolve the issue through WhatsUp Gold and there was an incident, we would have lost important tools for the agency's response."

—Thomas Magee
Regional Network Manager
Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Not only is being notified of a potential problem imperative, but being able to distinguish one type of problem with the server from another is just as vital. "We also needed to be able to trend a communication problem so we could see if it was just a hiccup in the switch or something more serious," says Magee.

"The power plants aren't in major cities, meaning we don't have a single telecom carrier to each site—which can lead to latency issues." WhatsUp Gold gathers real-time and trending network information

10 Maguire Road
Lexington, MA 02421
(781) 676-5700

Zekeringstraat 17
1014 BM Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Minami-Azabu
T&F Building 8th Flr.
4-11-22 Minami-Azabu
Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0047
03-6826-5720

for technical and business reporting, which means Magee has the information he needs at his fingertips.

While the NRC relies on WhatsUp Gold to keep them apprised of a potentially troublesome situation, it functions daily in a much more pedestrian yet essential manner. “We’ve really been honing the monitoring of toner levels in the regional offices,” says Magee. “Unused toner wastes money – so we monitor it using SNMP and when there’s a need for more in a certain site we receive a request at our help desk for the toner for that specific printer. Previously it was kept in a supply room and folks didn’t know what they needed. WhatsUp Gold allowed us to take the ability to waste toner out of people’s hands.”

Prior to choosing WhatsUp Gold as their network monitoring solution, the NRC looked at another monitoring software, but found it to be too expensive. “WhatsUp Gold had everything we needed at the right price and over time Ipswitch added a lot of features to WhatsUp Gold. It’s been reliable and is a standard for us.”

The NRC is making full use of WhatsUp Gold in mixed environments around the U.S. It’s being utilized by more than 250 people in one building and by three to five staffers in 16 power plants, and is being used to monitor printers, servers (Novell, Linux, Microsoft Windows® 2000 and 2003), switches and Web content. Magee notes the ability to monitor and make changes through the Web console makes managing the whole environment that much easier. “The new Web application is outstanding,” he says. “You’re able to do everything you want – it’s unparalleled. Even SharePoint® Server management isn’t as detailed as this. In my opinion, it makes the application more attainable to more people. Now we can make changes right from the data center on the Webpage.”

WhatsUp Gold’s active, passive, and performance monitors work together with configured actions so that customers can be advised with alerts when something needs attention. “About a month ago we scheduled a reboot and I was notified at home that the email server was still down,” reports Magee. “So I came in on Sunday and got the server back up. The server got hung up on the reboot and couldn’t find a file. I was able to locate the file and bring the server back up. The result would have been a major problem for someone on Monday. Mail would have been backed up all weekend. Most people start early so typically half the people are here by 7:00 a.m. It would have been a deluge of calls to the help desk.”

“In another case, the SQL server we use to monitor incident response in the event of a nuclear event went down. It’s also a data store for the Microsoft SharePoint® application. If we didn’t resolve the issue through WhatsUp Gold and there was an incident, we would have lost important tools for the agency’s response.”

One of Magee’s future goals for WhatsUp Gold is to better track the trend of the servers in general and be able to better plan for expansion. “I would like to revisit each individual device and establish service monitoring, processor usage, etcetera. We rely on Microsoft Server tools and performance monitoring, but it doesn’t work very well. WhatsUp Gold can do that better.”

10 Maguire Road
Lexington, MA 02421
(781) 676-5700

Zekeringstraat 17
1014 BM Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Minami-Azabu
T&F Building 8th Flr.
4-11-22 Minami-Azabu
Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0047
03-6826-5720