INTRODUCTION

Hallmark Health System is the premier provider of healthcare to northern Boston, Massachusetts communities. The System includes nine healthcare facilities and is affiliated with Massachusetts General Hospital for cardiology and Tufts Medical Center for neonatology. Hallmark Health is the official healthcare partner of the Boston Bruins.

Hallmark Health has two campuses — Melrose-Wakefield Hospital and Lawrence Memorial Hospital in Medford — that were looking to obtain a downtime protection solution that would allow them to upload and maintain up-to-date eMARs during a downtime. The facilities had experienced unplanned as well as planned downtimes of their MEDITECH healthcare information system and wanted to ensure there would be uninterrupted access to important patient records and information during future downtimes.

THE CHALLENGE

When Hallmark Health went live with the eMAR process in MEDITECH, IS administrators were using an FTP process for downtime protection. The FTP process was slow and complex (requiring word macros and other formatting issues). There were also access limitations, as all staff were not able to access the storage location.

Hallmark Health looked at several downtime protection solutions, however they did not resolve the issues that needed to be addressed to obtain the up-to-date medication administration information. Hallmark Health then turned to neighboring hospitals to find out what they were using. Milford Regional Medical Center in Milford, MA, and other facilities recommended NetSafe, Interbit Data's downtime protection and business continuance solution.

THE SOLUTION

 "We needed to get something up and going rather quickly in the event of a downtime, so on the recommendation of a number of key sites in our area, NetSafe sounded like the solution for us," said Mark-Harrison Nelson, senior systems analyst/interface analyst at Hallmark Health. "Once we did a demo of NetSafe, we saw that it would definitely meet our needs and it is also painless to set up."

In addition to its pain-free installation, NetSafe was chosen by Hallmark Health for several reasons:

- Ease of use, particularly for hospital staff outside IS,
- Low maintenance and little need for monitoring, and.
- The client interface, which is very easy to navigate.

Hallmark Health particularly likes having NetSafe for unplanned downtimes, as they have experienced two unplanned downtimes in the last year — one a network outage and the other a healthcare information system outage. By having NetSafe, IT staff can quickly access, print and distribute patient documents to the units, minimizing the time nurses are without the latest medication administration information. Access to the encrypted information stored on the local devices requires two-factor authentication through the Active Directory-enabled client or backup password tables, protecting the security of the patient data during the downtime.

During uptimes, eMARs are delivered to NetSafe every 30 minutes. Downtime eMARs are sent to three primary devices as well as devices in each nursing unit. A primary device is located in the IS department on a laptop that is hot-wired to the network and a primary device is located at each of the two hospitals on a desktop in nursing administration. All devices are on emergency power with a USB printer cable, which allows for local printing if the network or print server is down.

"We actually had a situation in which we were having network issues and MEDITECH was going down and coming up repeatedly and we weren't able to keep it up," explained Nelson. "With no network connectivity, one of the hospitals had no print capabilities at all, so the ability to get to that device and print the documents locally to the local printer was advantageous."

Exceptional Customer Service

Hallmark Health has found Interbit Data's customer service team to be very knowledgeable and supportive.

"I would rate them among the best of the several companies that we deal with," said Nelson.

When Hallmark Health needed to upgrade its NetSafe server as well as receive updates that would improve its performance and workflow, they needed to get approval from the IS Committee, which took several months. During that time, they were contacting Interbit Data two to three times each week to have them go into NetSafe, clear out the queues and reset the system so they could restart the document delivery process.

"We knew we had to take the updates, but we kept pushing it off," explained Nelson. "When that happens, you end up behind in software and start to inherit problems. Even though some companies would say, 'Look, we're just not going to do this,' the staff at Interbit Data worked with us and would get in there as soon as they could to get things cleared up.

"When I finally got approval from our IS department, Interbit Data moved us up in the schedule and within a week we were set for the upgrade. I think we had only an hour of downtime, and once we took those updates and the server upgrade, the system was back to running perfectly with little or no monitoring ever again. A negative situation turned into a positive as a result of the willingness of Interbit Data's customer service team to help us, especially once we said we're ready to take the updates."

CONCLUSION

NetSafe not only replaced the unreliable FTP process and eliminated its access and formatting issues, it has reduced the risk of nurses not having the medication administration information they need for maintaining patient care and safety during downtime.

"We now have the confidence we can quickly initiate printing of eMARs during a downtime," said Nelson. "We're looking at adding other documents, such as the Medical Record Index and Pharmacy Profiles, to the list of documents delivered to NetSafe for downtime protection."