

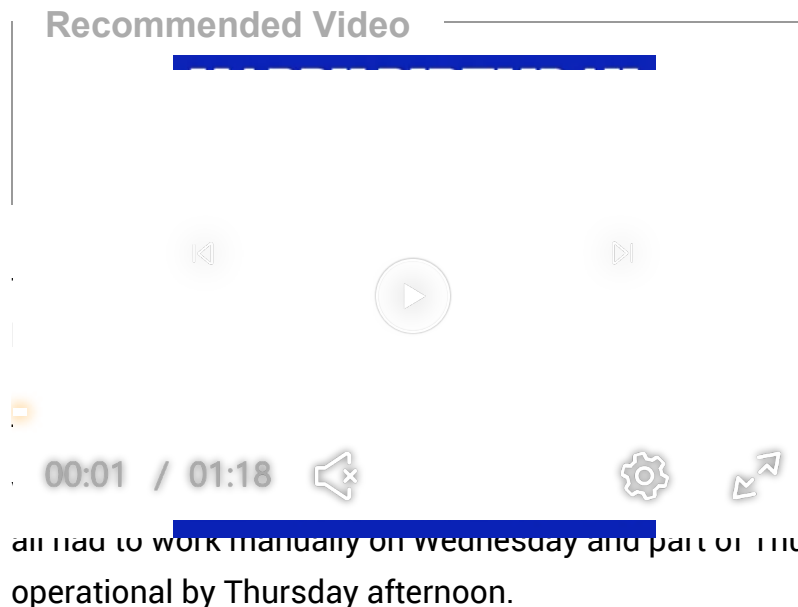
City of Laredo office recovering from ransomware virus

By **Julia Wallace**, LMTonline.com / Laredo Morning Times Updated 10:11 am CDT, Friday, May 24, 2019

The City of Laredo is nearly back on its feet after a ransomware virus encrypted a document management system used by the City Secretary's Office at around 1:30 a.m. Wednesday.

Co-Interim City Manager Rosario Cabello said Thursday afternoon that most of their departments' systems were up and running again.

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But all city employees' computers had to be shut off for much of Wednesday to contain the virus. The information technology staff reached each computer one by one and intentionally isolated from the services for the public. Still, they all had to work manually on Wednesday and part of Thursday. Not all computers were operational by Thursday afternoon.

No personal or employee information was compromised by this attack, Cabello said.

As soon as staff found out about the problem Wednesday morning, they contacted police, who contacted the FBI's cybersecurity division and Homeland Security Investigations, Cabello said.

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The FBI allegedly said that all protocols were in place, and that they contained the virus right away. An FBI spokesperson said it is their policy to neither confirm nor deny the existence of an investigation, and they do not identify victims who may seek their help.

The city also has IT consultants on board, SecuLore Solutions, to double check the X

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They have been preparing for this scenario, city spokesperson Nader Benavides said.

He noted that if the city hadn't had this insurance, they wouldn't have been able to get their information back. The city would have had to pay the ransom and get the feds further involved.

The City of Laredo backs up their system every night, so they will be able to restore all their history, IT Director Homero Vazquez said.

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The disaster preparedness that the fire and police departments practice is not dissimilar to this kind of process, he said. They prefer to keep it as an exercise, but they have protocol in place for situations such as these, Vazquez said.

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