MICROSOFT/CROWD STRIKE OUTAGE

Benedictine Living Community-Anoka

Introduction

Hello. My name is Tanya Welch and I work for Benedictine Living Communities. I am a Licensed Nursing Home Administrator and Assisted Living Director. Currently, I am the Administrator at BLC- Anoka. If you are not familiar with us; Benedictine has over 30 Communities, in 5 states, serving; Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota and Wisconsin. Benedictine is a, non-profit, Catholic faith-based organization entrusted with advancing the life-enhancing senior care ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Duluth, Minnesota.

We offer SNFS, AL's, IL, Memory Care, TCUs and Care Suites, for residents requiring a higher level of care.

Introduction Cont.

My topic will be about the Microsoft /CrowdStrike outage that occurred July 19th-22nd, 2024 and how our community was affected. We needed to activate downtime procedures, as our EMR system, Matrixcare, was non-functioning. This outage had an effect on our communities. as well as the rest of the world, in some form or fashion. As you know, it is imperative, (and a luxury)that we have the use of EMR (electronic medical records) day in and day out, to ensure smooth workflow within each community.

This may not have been such a huge issue, in our industry, if it was prior to the 90s when EMR took off in full swing and became a staple for every HealthCare facility, pretty much worldwide. Prior to that it was too expensive to invest in for most. They became more affordable during the 1980s (2021 Net Health) Now that we utilize it, its hard to imagine life without it right?

Electronic Health Record (EHR) aka EMR, can be defined "as a digital version of a patient's comprehensive medical history. Designed to be shared and updated over time, an EHR system securely maintains patient information across different healthcare providers, including physicians, specialists, and pharmacies.

The EHR system encompass a patient's medical history, medical health information, diagnoses, medications, immunization dates, radiology images, lab results, and even demographic data, all of which are vital for medical practices making informed healthcare decisions.

A fun fact; The history of the EHR/EMR companies began in the 1960s – The Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, was one of the first major health systems (among a select few other healthcare providers) to adopt an EHR[1] and move away from the massive swath of healthcare organizations keeping paper medical records, to adopt an EHR.[1] In the 1960s, EMR programs and EHRs were so expensive that they were only used by the government in partnership with health organizations. (2021 Net Health).

https://www.nethealth.com/blog/the-history-of-electronic-health-records-ehrs/

A change in times

The old ways of maintaining patient charts.

The new ways.

On July 19th 2024, American cybersecurity company, CrowdStrike distributed a faulty update to its Falcon Sensor security software that caused widespread problems with Microsoft Windows computers running the software. As a result, roughly 8.5 million systems crashed and were unable to properly restart[1] in what has been called the largest outage in the history of information technology[2] and "historic in scale".[3]
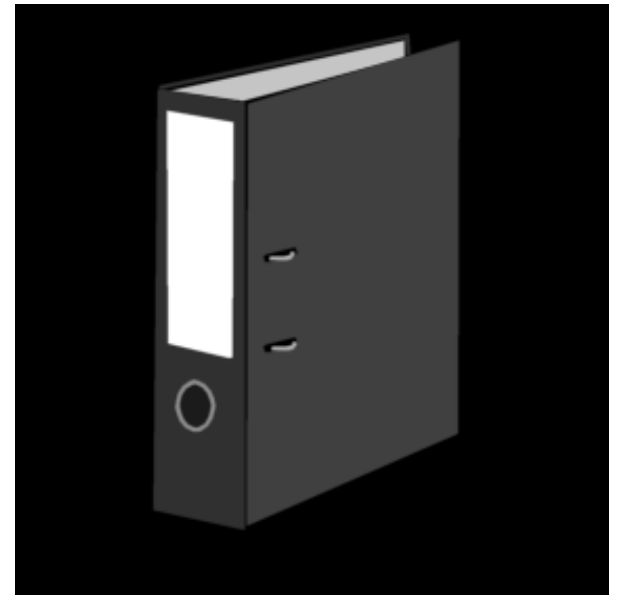https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_CrowdStrike-related_IT_outages

MICROSOFT
/CROWDSTRIKE

Benedictine Downtime Process

As I stated, this outage affect each of us in our prospective industries. At Benedictine we utilized our "Downtime Process" policy, to help guide us through this time.

The downtime process was initiated, in essence due to the communication between our communities, our top notch I.T dept and representatives from Matrixcare, (our EMR platform). They kept us in the loop, hourly /daily, with any updates. We were also provided forms to utilize, from Matrixcare, during this time. Some of the bigger things to consider were;

1. Handling medications offline
2. Resident services during offline time
3. Communications/drafting notes (to add to the system, once its back up and running).
4. How to handle residents sent to ED /hospital, etc

(Our Dietary dept was not affected, as we, did conduct written orders at that time. We now utilize Mealsuite, and their software was not affected by the outage. We did utilize a paper trail, for any new or changed diet orders, involving Matrixcare).

We had access to resident records, including medications and services, through our offline computer system. This offline system is updated at least monthly, to keep resident records current.

When Matrixcare is down: Instructions to frontline staff;

Print out "To-Do List" from offline computer for CNAs , in order to follow the service plans.

Shower schedule already printed out and updated as needed. This is always posted on the resident assistant/CNA work board.

Laundry schedules are already printed out weekly for staff to follow.

We were able to print out med lists for the medication binder, by doing the med reconciliation weekly. This allowed staff to pass medications correctly.

When iPhones are down: WIFI/Notify down (staff to staff communications)

Activating the pagers – Call lights will go off, on the pagers and staff are able to respond to them as normal.

Activating the walkies – Having an open line of communication between all staff in the facility.

1.If the WIFI goes down, the offline computer will /can still print.

2. We keep printed copies of the med list in a binder.

3. Laundry and shower schedules are printed out, 2 weeks in advance and posted. (This is a normal process, in addition to online access).

4 We can still print all resident cares and a "to do" list on the offline computer.

5. BLC-Anoka utilizes the "Notify System" (internal communication system) to communicate with one another. (connected to resident pendants/call button).

6. If we cannot utilize the notify system (if its down due to WIFI) we also have hand held walkie- talkies and we then use pagers to answer resident pendants.

7. Our kitchen staff and receptionist, also have access to notify phones, in addition to Matrixcare

The staff can basically continue to do all of their normal task, except for charting. They can document and sign off , on their printed-out task list, then transfer that data to Matrix, once the system is back up and running.

HOT WASH

Being a part of the coalition teaches us that you haven't truly been through an incident (whether a drill or in real life) without conducting an old fashioned "hot wash" AKA an After-Action Report/ Improvement Plan. (AAR/IP)

The plan typically includes;

The overview of the scenario

The Design Summary

Participants involved

The Improvement plan/Lessons Learned

Strengths and Weaknesses

- Without going through the entire process again, I would add that our strengths consisted of

- 1. Our support for one another-internally and from our support center

- 2. Communication amongst ourselves, the support center, our I.T dept. and MatrixCare

- 3. Also, having a plan, explanations and discussion, if the residents were to ask any questions (this never happened, because their cares and services occurred as usual)

- A Weakness would be ; Making sure that all staff know what to do and who to report to, in case of an outage, during off hours. We now have increased various trainings and drills. Every month a different scenario. Especially as new staff come aboard.

Conclusion

- While the Microsoft/Crowdstrike outage was a hinderance to us all, with "8.5 million windows operating systems crashing, worldwide", we all made it through and was able to resume our convenient lives once everything was back to normal. CrowdStrike CEO, George Kurtz, took the time to apologize to the public, and stated they were deeply sorry for the negative impact to its customers.

- Regardless of how it happened, when it happened, and to whom it happened, its always best to have a back up plan in place. Hopefully, lessons were learned and practices put into place, in an effort to maintain "business as usual" if, and when there is a next time for system failure.

- We at Benedictine Living Community-Anoka, followed company policy and protocols. We worked manually to ensure residents were taken care of, and by gods grace, they were none the wiser, that there was a global system crash.

- Thank you for your time.

  Tanya S. Welch

- References;

- https://www.benedictineliving.org/about-us/mission-and-vision/

- https://www.nethealth.com/blog/the-history-of-electronic-health-records-ehrs/

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_CrowdStrike-related_IT_outages#Outage