

THE
NATIONAL LAW REVIEW

Sammamish, Washington Declares Emergency After Ransomware Attack

Thursday, January 31, 2019

I was a speaker at a recent conference of municipalities in a state last week, and during my presentation, I mentioned the various cyber-attacks that have affected cities, towns and educational departments in the U.S. (Atlanta, GA; Farmington, CT; West Haven, CT; Leeds, AL; Yarrow Point, WA; and Leominster, MA to name a few). Little did I know that at that very time, the City of Sammamish, WA was declaring an emergency following a ransomware attack on the City's computer system.

The emergency was declared so City officials could quickly hire cybersecurity experts without going through standard contracting and procurement processes.

The City's computers were shut down for most of the day when the attack occurred. Following the attack, the City took down a building permit portal and map services, and residents had to resort to the olden days of having to go to City Hall to access those services while the computers were down.

Municipalities are known targets of cyber-attacks due to limited resources and a perceived lack of cyber readiness and sophistication. These attacks can bring cities and towns to their knees, which is the reason to increase awareness and preparedness.

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