

**BIZfact****\$26,700**

Average salary of maids and house-keeping cleaners on Long Island

Source: 2014 wage data, State Department of Labor

**U.S. CONSUMERS BORROW MORE**

U.S. consumers increased their borrowing in November, as stronger demand for auto and student loans offset a drop in credit card debt.

The Federal Reserve said consumer borrowing rose by \$14.1 billion following a \$16 billion increase in October.

The figures suggest that an improving economy and strong employment gains over the past year may be making consumers more comfortable with ramping up their borrowing.

The category that includes credit card debt fell \$946 million after an increase of \$1.48 billion in October. The decline was outweighed by a \$15 billion increase in the category that covers auto and student loans.

The Fed's monthly consumer credit report, released last week, does not provide separate data for those two categories.

The November survey put total borrowing 7 percent above where it was a year ago. Auto and student loans are up 8.4 percent, while credit card debt has risen a smaller 3.4 percent.

Automakers posted a strong sales year, and student loans have been surging since the recession ended as many people who could not find jobs decided to go back to school to improve their job skills.

But there is concern young Americans are being saddled with debt that will keep them from buying homes or spending as previous generations have been able to do. — AP

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# Planning for disaster

After fire, IT servicer's backup solution kept Waldorf Risk at work

BY LISA DU  
Special to Newsday

Waldorf Risk Solutions makes a business of helping companies with their insurance needs and contingency planning. But last summer the firm tapped into its own emergency plans when its office building went up in flames.

Bill Waldorf, a senior managing partner at Waldorf Risk, remembers arriving at the scene on a Saturday afternoon last August when firefighters were still on the roof of the single-story building in Huntington that housed the company his grandfather built. He estimates the company — which provides insurance services to nonprofits and educational institutions — suffered more than \$600,000 in damage.

"You're kind of helpless looking at your family business in flames in front of you. . . . You watch and you think about how things are going to continue," he recalled.

**Digital cloud backup**

Waldorf's first call was to the firm's IT servicer, Flexible Systems of Hauppauge, which provided the company a disaster recovery space from which to work. All of the company's data was backed up in digital cloud services, and the firm's 25 employees were able to transition seamlessly back to action by Monday morning.

Waldorf was up and running the next business day, but not all firms are as prepared. About 25 percent of companies do not recover following a major disaster, according to the Institute for Business and Home Safety. And with superstorm Sandy still fresh in Long Islanders' minds, emergency planning has become more critical for businesses.

Business owners often think they're prepared with insurance coverage in place, but just as crucial is having a plan of action for the minute disaster strikes, business specialists said. That includes having a list of people to call first (typically IT personnel and a lawyer or insurance broker), designating a representative to communicate with clients and customers, and knowing how to access the business' data backups so operations can flow again.



Stephen, left, and Bill Waldorf of Waldorf Risk Solutions worked in this Flexible Systems space in Hauppauge last fall and are now in a temp site until renovation of their Huntington office is complete.

Companies should set up an action plan to respond to a disruption of business rather than plan for a "worst case scenario," which is a vague and unknowable situation, said Alan Berman, president of DRI International, a Manhattan nonprofit specializing in disaster management education.

One way to keep an updated disaster plan is to assign certain employees to an informal crisis management team that reviews the actionable steps annually, said Philip Semprevivo, a lawyer at Biedermann Hoening Semprevivo PC in Manhattan.

**Know 'key necessities'**

Business owners should "have a clear idea of what their key necessities are to get back on line with operations," said Erica Chase-Gregory, acting director of the Small Business Development Center at Farmingdale State College.

Waldorf echoed the importance of preparation, saying his biggest challenge after the fire was coordination between business operations, dealing

**AT A GLANCE****Name**

Waldorf Risk Solutions LLC of Huntington

**Managing partners**

Bill and Stephen Waldorf

**Founded**

1928

**Temporary site**

Hauppauge

**Employees**

29; 25 on Long Island

in its ability to rebound so quickly after the fire. But Waldorf says he remembers the days when data backup consisted of copying files onto an external hard drive and taking it home with him every night.

**Hiring IT consultants**

Even the smallest mom-and-pop shops should be able to hire IT consultants willing to work within a range of budgets, said Chase-Gregory. Most companies can also pay a nominal fee to use a simple tool such as Dropbox or Google Drive, Berman said.

Quickly communicating with customers and employees to explain the situation is also paramount, Berman added.

It's key to reroute phones to a working number and to have a company representative make sure the most crucial parties are informed. "You don't want someone to fill in the blanks and make up the story for you," Semprevivo said.

Waldorf Risk's smooth transition meant it was able to call the shots in communicating with clients and business partners. With the exception of news coverage of the fire, Waldorf said, "the greatest success of all is not one client even knew about it" otherwise.