

Gilsbar Achieves Rapid HIPAA Compliance with SecureZIP

Gilsbar at a Glance: Since its founding in 1959, Gilsbar, Inc. has been offering financial and insurance administrative and support services to professionals and employer groups across the United States. Today, the Covington, Louisiana-based firm provides its services to more than 250,000 participants, making Gilsbar one of the South's oldest and largest providers of administrative and support services.

As part of its business, Gilsbar processes insurance claims, and transfers related information from its AS/400 system to its many clients on a daily basis. Gilsbar's clients run the gamut from carriers, banks and clearinghouses to self-funded groups and hospitals, and include small enterprises that primarily use Windows-based PCs to process data, as well as larger organizations that rely on IBM mainframes as their claims repositories.

The Challenge: In 1996, the U.S. Government passed a piece of legislation called the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). HIPAA affects all health care organizations and related companies who transfer Protected Health Information (PHI) over the Internet. The purpose of the act is to protect PHI, which includes a range of medical claims information.

Gilsbar, like other companies in its industry, was faced with complying with HIPAA's stringent privacy requirements no later than April 14, 2003. Penalties for non-compliance could include legal and financial ramifications.

"HIPAA is extremely important, and the consequences for non-compliance can be significant," said Gilsbar's IS Development Manager Gene Knobloch. "We knew that there were literally thousands of tools out there designed for HIPAA. Our objective was to find a tool that was easy to implement within our AS/400 environment, and also provided complete interoperability to meet our clients' varied platform requirements. Ease of use—for our employees and our clients—was also a must. And we couldn't afford to 'break the bank' to comply with HIPAA."

Solution Overview: When it came time to select a HIPAA solution, Gilsbar considered PGP and PKWARE. The company eliminated PGP as an option, however, because it was more expensive for use in AS/400 and mainframe environments. In addition, because Gilsbar had implemented PKWARE's PKZIP for data compression in mid 2000, 75 percent of its clients—both large and small—were already relying on a PKWARE solution.

"PKZIP is an affordable solution that's easy-to-use and interoper-

able across all major enterprise platforms," said Knobloch. "When we found out that it was being enhanced to create a new SecureZIP product that met HIPAA standards, we were thrilled. Since we were already using PKZIP, it didn't make sense to learn another solution, go through the installation process and then write new procedures – particularly for something that was so much more expensive."

Gilsbar began to beta test SecureZIP for OS/400 with enhanced security capabilities in the fall of 2002. The beta process went very smoothly, requiring only a few months for testing. "It was a great opportunity for Gilsbar to offer product input," said Knobloch.

When the final SecureZIP for OS/400 product was delivered to Gilsbar in January 2003, the company was ready to hit the ground running. Today, 90 percent of Gilsbar's clients are HIPAA-compliant using SecureZIP, with the rest in the process of being converted.

"The entire process was seamless," said Knobloch. "Our clients operate across a range of systems—from standalone PCs, NT networks, AS/400 systems, and mainframes. Today, SecureZIP allows us to combine data compression and encryption, including 256-bit AES strong encryption, without regard to platform. As a result, we were able to quickly and easily begin to exchange information in a secure, HIPAA-compliant environment."

Benefits: Gilsbar has already allocated 3200 employee hours to complete HIPAA compliance. SecureZIP program implementation required less than 10 of those 3200 hours.

"With SecureZIP, we only had to add two keyword parameters to our existing PKZIP batch routines to be compliant with HIPAA," said Knobloch. "This took less than one hour. After that, our five-person team only needed eight additional hours to learn the upgrade. Our learning curve savings were tremendous, since we expected at least a week of training per team member. We couldn't have asked for an easier implementation. And the application price was extremely affordable."

PKWARE's commitment to customer service also contributed to Gilsbar's election of SecureZIP. PKWARE service consultants participated in conference calls with Gilsbar clients to help 'update' their perception that the solution was limited to older and weaker methods of encryption. In fact, Gilsbar's customers discovered that the latest version of SecureZIP provided strong encryption levels, including 128, 192 and 256 bits through the Advanced Encryption Standard (AES).

Gilsbar continued

In addition, PKWARE's ZIP Reader Partner Program, which allowed Gilsbar to distribute the ZIP Reader from its own co-branded Web site, played a tremendous role in Gilsbar's ability to rapidly deploy SecureZIP.

"The ZIP Reader Partner Program provided us with a fast, branded way to ensure that our partners had the tools they needed to open ZIP files and decode our encrypted communications. By leveraging the Reader Partner Program, we initially deployed free ZIP Readers to 222 users in less than 60 days. This saved Gilsbar time and money, while making HIPAA compliance a painless process for our partners.

"Because PKWARE designed SecureZIP to be so easy to implement and use, my initial instinct was to worry that the product wouldn't satisfy HIPAA requirements," said Knobloch. "The complete opposite, however, was true. SecureZIP works great, and Gilsbar couldn't ask for anything better. In this day and age, when everyone is trying to do more with less, PKWARE delivers—I find that refreshing."

Customer Solution Spotlight: Gilsbar Profile

A New Orleans based Insurance Services firm, Gilsbar offers an array of professional and employee policies to more than 250,000 participants in over 20 states. The company ranks among the South's oldest and largest providers of administrative and support services to professional associations and employer groups.

Needs:

- File interoperability with customers' disparate computing platforms, ranging from PCs to mainframe computers
- HIPAA compliant approach to securing file transmissions and storage — that could be easily adopted by their client base

Solution:

- SecureZIP for OS/ 400 with Strong Security
- ZIP Reader Partner Program

Results:

"SecureZIP is a powerful solution. At Gilsbar, we exchange large files with our insurance provider clients, and the software's interoperability between MVS, Windows and other computing platforms makes data transmission easy and practically instantaneous. Not only does SecureZIP enable us and our partners to free up bandwidth and storage, but the software's strong encryption capabilities help us to more easily achieve HIPAA compliance by ensuring that sensitive files we transmit and archive are secured."

Gene Knobloch
IS Development Manager
Gilsbar, Inc

PKWARE®

9025 North Deerwood Drive
Brown Deer, WI 53223-2480
<http://www.pkware.com>
1-888-4-PKWARE(US)
+44-118-979-9909(UK)