



CASE STUDY

Elevate Technology Group helps rural communities restore and secure communications after disaster

Barracuda's network security solutions deliver resilient, secure connectivity for communities in crisis, while reducing IT burden for local organizations.

Community profile

- Nine unincorporated communities along the McKenzie River, in Lane County, Oregon
- Population: ~850 residents directly impacted
- Essential services: Fire department, schools, local businesses, healthcare, and emergency response

Challenges

- Complete loss of communications after wildfire in 2020 destroyed infrastructure
- Emergency alerts and evacuation notices failed to reach many residents
- Critical need for secure, reliable connectivity for emergency operations, remote schooling and family reunification
- Rugged terrain and dense forests made traditional solutions (satellite, mesh) ineffective
- Limited IT resources and funding in rural, volunteer-driven communities

Partner profile: Elevate Technology Group

- Managed services provider delivering comprehensive technology and support services
- Barracuda partner since 2012
- Deep experience with rural and public sector deployments

Solutions

- Barracuda CloudGen Firewall
- Barracuda SecureEdge

Results

- Restored secure internet and communications within days
- Enabled real-time coordination for fire camps, allowing firefighters and GIS teams to communicate and upload data instantly
- Provided public Wi-Fi in community parking lots, supporting remote schooling and family reunification during the pandemic
- Built long-term resilience: systems have withstood subsequent wildfires, ice storms, and power outages, keeping communities connected



Disaster strikes: The communications blackout

When the 2020 Holiday Farm Fire swept through the Cascade Range, it left more than physical devastation. It severed the lifelines of communication that held the community together.

“The night the fire swept through, everything went down. Phones, internet, cell towers, all of it,” recalls Melanie Stanley, Chair of the Upper McKenzie Rural Fire Protection District. “I couldn’t reach my daughter, who was out fighting the fire, and for three days, I had no way to know if she was safe except for a scratchy landline. It was terrifying, not just for me, but for everyone in our community.”

“Emergency managers couldn’t get evacuation alerts out. The reverse 911 system failed, and people had to go door-to-door to warn neighbors,” says Geoff Turner, CEO of Elevate Technology Group. “The usual solutions — satellite, mesh networks — just didn’t work in the Cascade terrain. We knew we had to get creative, fast.”

Rebuilding connectivity: Innovation and community effort

With traditional infrastructure crippled and commercial providers slow to respond, the community, a volunteer group formed as Oregon Internet Response and Elevate Technology Group took matters into their own hands.

“We started by building a microwave network over the mountains,” Geoff explains. “We got permission to use ski lifts, hiked solar panels and batteries up to remote towers, and set up wireless links to parking lots, schools, and churches. It was all hands on-deck — volunteers, local leaders, even businesses donating equipment and time.”

“I’ll never forget the first night we got Wi-Fi working in the parking lot,” Geoff continues. “There was an elderly woman sitting in her car, crying. She told me, ‘This is the first time in three weeks I’ve been able to tell my family I’m alive and okay.’ That moment made every sleepless night worth it.”

“For months, those parking lots became our lifeline,” says Melanie. “Parents would sit in their cars on video calls for work, while kids did their schoolwork in the back seat. It wasn’t glamorous, but it kept us connected and gave us hope.”

Securing and scaling: Barracuda solutions in action

As the community moved from crisis response to long-term recovery, Elevate and Barracuda brought in robust, scalable technology to ensure security and resilience. The technical transformation was substantial.

“When the time came to transition from emergency response to rebuilding, we brought in [Barracuda CloudGen Firewall](#) and [Barracuda SecureEdge](#) appliances,” Geoff says. “We put them in the school, the fire station, the clinics, and the fire camps. That let us prioritize emergency traffic, keep the network secure and make sure everyone — students, responders, families — could get online safely.”

“The Barracuda firewalls were a game-changer for us,” Geoff continues. “We used advanced traffic shaping to prioritize real-time services like Office 365, Zoom and Google Workspace for students and emergency operations. At the same time, we could throttle or block non-essential traffic — like streaming video — so the limited bandwidth was used where it mattered most.”

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Geoff Turner, CEO
Elevate Technology Group



“We set up dual uplinks at critical sites, combining fixed wireless and commercial Starlink, with the Barracuda firewalls handling automatic failover. That meant if one connection went down, the other took over seamlessly — no one even noticed. The firewalls also gave us deep packet inspection, intrusion detection and prevention (IDS/IPS), and SSL interception where needed, so we could enforce security policies and protect sensitive data.”

“At the fire camps, we created separate SSIDs for operations and for the wildland firefighters,” Geoff explains. “Barracuda’s policy-based controls let us guarantee bandwidth for command staff during the day, and then shift priority at night so firefighters could FaceTime their families. We also used the firewalls to set up VPN tunnels for secure voice and data, and to protect public-facing wildfire cameras from cyber threats.”

“The integrated reporting and user awareness features in Barracuda’s platform were essential,” Geoff adds. “We could monitor usage, block risky sites and ensure compliance with federal and local regulations — especially important for the school and fire department networks.”

“What we’ve built isn’t just about technology. It’s about community. It’s about making sure that, no matter what happens, we can stay connected, informed, and resilient. Barracuda and Elevate have been with us every step of the way.”

Melanie Stanley, Chair

Upper McKenzie Rural Fire Protection District

Resilience for the future

Today, the community is not only restored but better prepared for whatever comes next. The partnership between Elevate, Barracuda, and local leaders has built a foundation for ongoing resilience.

“After the fire, we had an ice storm that knocked out power and internet for almost everyone,” Melanie remembers. “But because of the way Elevate set things up, my house stayed online. My whole family, including my sister who works for the Forest Service, camped out at my place to keep working and learning. I became the neighborhood hub.”



“We’ve had a wildfire every year since 2020 — sometimes three at once,” Melanie says. “But now, when disaster strikes, we’re ready. The fire station, the school, the clinics — they all have resilient, secure connections. And if there’s ever a problem, I don’t call a help desk. I just message Geoff, and he’s on it.”

In fact, December 2025 saw massive storms in the Cascades. “The winds knocked down the tower on the top of Castle Rock Mountain,” Melanie continues. “But Geoff and his crew were on it right away. They lugged replacement equipment up the mountain in the middle of the storm and got our internet service restored yet again. Elevate is a huge boon to our community.”

“Looking ahead, we’re piloting mobile Secure Connector units and SecureEdge appliances for fire trucks and ambulances, to ensure uninterrupted comms for first responders,” Geoff shares. “With Starlink and FirstNet, we’ll be able to provide secure Wi-Fi anywhere — so responders can communicate, access data and save lives, even in the most remote parts of the Cascades.”

“What we’ve built isn’t just about technology,” Melanie concludes. “It’s about community. It’s about making sure that, no matter what happens, we can stay connected, informed and resilient. Barracuda and Elevate have been with us every step of the way.”

Learn more

CloudGen Firewall

[Barracuda CloudGen Firewall](#) provides a comprehensive set of next-generation firewall technologies to ensure real-time network protection against a broad range of network threats, vulnerabilities, and exploits, including SQL injections, cross-site scripting, denial of service attacks, trojans, viruses, worms, spyware, and many more. Secure SD-WAN functionality integrated in Barracuda CloudGen Firewall lets you ensure that there is always enough bandwidth for business-critical applications.

SecureEdge

[Barracuda SecureEdge](#) secures your users, sites and things with an easy-to-deploy cloud-first platform that connects any device, application, and cloud/hybrid environment.

About Barracuda

Barracuda is a leading global cybersecurity company providing complete protection against complex threats for all sized businesses. Our AI-powered BarracudaONE platform secures email, data, applications, and networks with innovative solutions, managed XDR and a centralized dashboard to maximize protection and strengthen cyber resilience. Trusted by hundreds of thousands of IT professionals and managed service providers worldwide, Barracuda delivers powerful defenses that are easy to buy, deploy and use.