



Martin County Board of Elections

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Martin County Government Concludes Follow-up Cybersecurity Assessment by NCNG

In March 2021, the North Carolina National Guard Cyber Assessment & Assistance Team (NCAAT) completed a follow-up cybersecurity assessment for Martin County Government. The assessment validated changes and improvements made in the information technology systems environment, and helped identify any new vulnerabilities that may have surfaced over the past year. According to Matt Chytka, the Client Outreach and Liaison for the NCARNG-NCAAT, Martin County was one of the first participants in the NCAAT assessment program.

The North Carolina Department of Information Technology (DIT) requested that the North Carolina National Guard (NCNG) perform the 2021 assessment of Martin County's information technology systems. The assessment results are used to identify potential gaps in coverage and serve as a baseline of improvement recommendations that can be leveraged for future planning purposes. The NCNG will also provide the report to the North Carolina Chief Risk Officer and State Chief Information Officer. This will provide the state DIT leadership a more holistic view of their counties in order to ensure proper resources are allocated.

In September 2019, the North Carolina State Board of Elections hosted a special training event where the NCNG held a workshop for county election officials. Information regarding the cybersecurity assessment services being offered by the NCNG was passed along from the County's Director of Elections to Martin County's Information Technology Director Jeb Gardner. Martin County IT works continuously to improve the County's computer networks and cybersecurity posture. With limited resources and only a full-time IT staff of one, the County took full advantage of this free service that would typically cost a minimum of \$50,000 by a private assessor. The project's original scope was to review cybersecurity for the Martin County Board of Elections, but was expanded to encompass the entire county network.

In December 2019, the State of North Carolina funded a team comprised of highly trained North Carolina National Guard Soldiers to conduct vulnerability assessments at the county level. The service was offered at no cost to the County, as it was funded by the State of North Carolina. Upon request, the NCAAT came in and provided a comprehensive report to Martin County's IT Director. This report helped discover any remediation needed as the County headed into the 2020 election season and detailed ways to continue to harden county networks from compromise. The assessment was solely to provide the County a picture of its current cyber defense posture. From there, the NCAAT could assist in the remediation for the County to ensure the most secure network possible.

Martin County IT Director Jeb Gardner explains "These programs are a huge benefit for Martin as a Tier 1 county, given our limited resources and funding. Having the North Carolina National Guard perform their assessment has helped me with justification to implement and purchase several solutions and policies. Reports showing improvements made, based on their findings and actions, show how valuable this service is if we all do our part."

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