



Company: Gruppo AB

Industry: Energy, Cogeneration

Country / Region: Europe & Brazil

Website: www.gruppoab.it/en

Company Profile

Gruppo AB operates in the fields of cogeneration and the promotion of renewable energy sources. It is a European benchmark company in the field of natural gas and bio-gas cogeneration CHP technologies.

Challenge

Gruppo AB needed to remotely monitor client systems and track alarms and production data in real-time to perform maintenance and monitoring services. To accomplish this, the company needed to establish an IPSEC tunnel between the network of the plant and the corporate network.

Solution

WatchGuard XTM

Benefits

- Simplified, multi-device management capabilities
- Collection of traffic logs through the WatchGuard server center
- Easy to configure
- Excellent support with WatchGuard LiveSecurity



Angelo Baronchelli, Founder, Gruppo AB

WatchGuard Provides

Industrial Strength Security for Gruppo AB



“With WatchGuard, managing a large number of appliances is simplified... Additionally, the ability to upgrade models by simply changing the license keys has allowed us to recoup our initial investment and then extend it by being able to upgrade the appliances' functionality without having to replace the hardware.”

- Pietro Baronchelli, CISO,
Gruppo AB

Background

Founded in 1981 by Angelo Baronchelli, Gruppo AB is a European benchmark company in the field of natural gas and biogas cogeneration CHP technologies, with modular solutions for outdoors and stations from 100 to 10,000 kWe.

Gruppo AB operates in both the field of industrial natural gas cogeneration, which primarily focuses on energy efficiency and economic savings; and the field of biogas cogeneration, which is dedicated to farms that invest in the valorization process for agricultural crops and/or livestock wastes. Gruppo AB also caters to the needs of municipalized

companies, consortiums, and institutions for the effective and sustainable use of the biogas produced by urban waste dumps.

Gruppo AB's industrial complex in Orzinuovi (BS), Italy houses the operations, which consists of over 36,000 square meters of linked buildings, including the production facility, and the engineering and office complexes, as well as about 110 industry specialists—making it the most important cogeneration “think-tank” in Europe.



As the sole international industrial leader in the market for cogeneration that can truly provide full service (from the initial project, to the implementation of the system, to the service and maintenance), Gruppo AB can represent a single point of contact from beginning to end for the customer. Gruppo AB's multidisciplinary teams define and plan the building of all components of the plants: hydraulics, mechanical and process. Today, there are more than 800 plants realized by Gruppo AB throughout Europe. In 2012, Gruppo AB closed with a turnover of 181 million Euros.

In recent years, Gruppo AB has expanded its activities abroad to European countries where cogeneration plays an increasingly strategic role. After launching into the Spanish market, with offices in Madrid and Barcelona, the Group set its sights on Eastern Europe, opening a subsidiary in Bucharest in 2009 and, in subsequent years, in Poland, Serbia and Croatia, and the Czech Republic. Branches also recently opened in the

Netherlands, Brazil, and Austria.

Challenge

“In 2007, we needed to transition our plants from the classic ‘dial-up’ connection, to an ‘always-on’ connection. This change enabled us to connect remotely and also to track alarms and production data in real-time, allowing us to perform maintenance and monitoring services on a daily basis,” explains Pietro Baronchelli, CISO at Gruppo AB. “So we decided to create the ABWS (AB Wan Service).”

As Pietro Baronchelli tells it, “We initially solicited offers from some of our partners for implementing VPN tunnels between our corporate office and the plants. But the costs quoted to us were too high in relation to the real management needs—and the integration of additional plants would have further increased costs. So, we evaluated alternatives. We were already familiar with WatchGuard Technologies since we were using a WatchGuard XTM appliance to connect our mobile technicians.

“The configuration went well from the outset, and included the creation of an IPSEC tunnel between the network of the plant and our corporate network.”

We decided to install a second WatchGuard appliance to act as a ‘VPN concentrator’ in our data center,” continues Baronchelli. “Another five XTM appliances were deployed as tests in the first five plants, run as pilot projects. The configuration went well from the outset, and included the creation of an IPSEC tunnel between the network of the plant and our corporate network. Today, there are over 450 plants connected in our ABWS, of which about 50 are located abroad.”

From Gruppo AB's headquarters, not only are the supervision PCs monitored, but also the various Ethernet-connected equipment in the plant, such as the PLCs, the engine control system, etc. To facilitate the identification of the plants in a wide area network (WAN), a dedicated DNS server was created that matches the name to the private IP address of that equipment. Gruppo AB technicians need only enter the DNS name in the various tools to be directly connected to the equipment required, as VPN tunnels are

always available.

“For security reasons, all installed appliances transmit traffic data logs through the WatchGuard server center installed in our data center, which stores them for an established length of time,” states Baronchelli. “To ensure 24/7 service to all the plants connected, the main WatchGuard appliance was flanked by a second appliance connected in cluster (High Availability).”

Benefits

“With WatchGuard, managing a large number of appliances is simplified,” asserts Baronchelli. “Once the template for the part to be configured is established, everything else becomes relatively simple.”

“Additionally, the ability to upgrade models by simply changing the license keys has allowed us to recoup our initial investment and then extend it by being able to upgrade the appliances’ functionality without having to replace the hardware,” says Baronchelli. “Essentially, this depends on having reliable appliances. The WatchGuard devices we deployed five years ago are still working—and the few instances of problems we experienced were quickly resolved with the help of the excellent support from WatchGuard LiveSecurity.”

Thanks to WatchGuard’s flexible XTM architecture, scalability, and reliability, Gruppo AB stands well poised for future growth with the ability to take any potential security challenges head on.

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Pietro Baronchelli, CISO, Gruppo AB

About WatchGuard

Since 1996, WatchGuard Technologies has provided reliable, easy-to-manage security appliances to hundreds of thousands of businesses worldwide. WatchGuard’s award-winning extensible threat management (XTM) network security solutions combine firewall, VPN, and a suite of security services to boost protection in critical attack areas. The extensible content security (XCS) line of products offers content security across email and web, as well as data loss prevention. Both product lines help you meet regulatory compliance requirements including PCI DSS, HIPAA, SOX and GLBA. Represented by more than 15,000 partners in 120 countries, WatchGuard is headquartered in Seattle, Washington, with offices in North America, Latin America, Europe, and Asia Pacific. For more information, visit www.watchguard.com.

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