



CASE STUDY

# Power Generation Company Centralizes Network Operation and Increases Availability with Secure SD-WAN

Since 1979, Sullair Argentina has focused on the manufacture, distribution, and rental of equipment for the construction, land movement, lighting, and work-at-height industries. More recently, portfolio diversification has led Sullair to add power generation services, with power projects centered mainly in Argentina (integrated into the Argentinean Interconnection System) and Brazil.

Sullair's work in the power generation segment has posed several challenges—both financial and risk-based. The company's core mandate is providing high-quality power support, as this directly affects the basic energy services that citizens receive. For Sullair, a nationwide network of local facilities has been essential to its offering, as have high-quality equipment and technical services. The company's objective has always been to offer robust, safe, and reliable infrastructure to its clients—a strong foundation upon which it builds its value proposal.

As it remodeled several of its plants, Sullair also decided to modify certain operational aspects. Among the changes, the company implemented an integrated communications network spanning all power plants with redundant links for high availability. The network not only provides high performance with security but also the ability for Sullair to manage and control information from its headquarters.

## A World-class Communication and Network Security Solution

Energy is critical infrastructure, and operating in the power generation sector necessitates developing projects with specific economic and contractual characteristics. These demands motivated Sullair to search for a solution that incorporated the most advanced technology available.

"We required a network with high security standards—so there was no chance for an energy plant to be attacked from the outside. Neither was it permissible for communications to go down in the middle of a critical operational process, which could even be more likely to occur than an attack," says Andrés Koper, plant maintenance manager at Sullair.



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### Details

**Customer:** Sullair Argentina

**Industry:** Power and Utilities

**Location:** Argentina

### Business Impact

- Centralized control and network security across multiple power generation plants, allowing the company to make better decisions based on a constant flow of information
- Increased communications network availability and guaranteed communication with other players in the national electricity market
- Guaranteed the stabilization of the communications network for critical operational processes
- Optimized network bandwidth, resulting in more efficient business processes

The company began the assessment using a redundant network design to ensure communication between all the facilities involved in the operation. This was conducted in collaboration with Wezen Group, Fortinet's partner at Sullair. Together, the companies chose a solution that allowed the kind of multifacility redundancy they sought. "We chose Fortinet's Secure SD-WAN solution for our internet connectivity, in addition to a satellite backup," Koper says. "The latter, although it does not offer very high bandwidth, allows us to continue operating in case we experience any interference or service interruption from the local telecommunication providers."

Additionally, Sullair opened an Operations Center (OC) in its headquarters, allowing a centralized view of all plant activities. Previously, each power plant was managed and controlled locally. With the changeover, all operations are controlled remotely from the headquarters, and the company can make plant decisions based on a constant information inflow. Today, 11 power generation plants are operated from this central hub, and the company anticipates adding another.

### Secure Communications for Critical Operational Processes

Before deciding on the Secure SD-WAN solution, Sullair already utilized Fortinet security solutions on a network supporting its administrative applications—a network the IT team was very satisfied with. "Then, we replicated the model," explains Daniel Briff, plant operations and maintenance manager at Sullair. "We chose Fortinet to guarantee the security of the information we have to transmit."

The impact was clear. Most significantly, Sullair achieved high network availability. Although the measured availability was acceptable prior to the implementation of the Fortinet solution, the company suffered certain communications disruptions that would not be permissible with the new operation. Additionally, Sullair has been able to increase its bandwidth by procuring additional and redundant links, which are load balanced and optimized through Fortinet Secure SD-WAN. This has improved the speed of multiple operational processes. According to Briff, the previous bandwidth limitations resulted in slow data visualization and lengthy response times, which complicated workflows.

These achievements have been critical for Sullair, because the company has been able to provide customers and other players in the national electricity market with the guarantee of a secure network. "As we are linked to the Argentine Interconnection System, it is important that the information is always available. Some institutions receive updates on the status of our facilities, and this data must arrive at the right time, as it is part of our contract commitment with those organizations," said Koper.

Fortinet Secure SD-WAN helped Sullair to ensure continual information accessibility through high availability, better network segmentation, and load balancing, as well as the ability to have redundant links.

### Steps Toward the Future

Today, Sullair's Secure SD-WAN solution has become a reference point for Argentinian companies' operations across the oil, energy, and machinery industries, reflecting how the technology can meet a host of different sector requirements. "We cannot allow an operational error or an external attack, because we have people working all the time, 24x7," Koper says. "The implementation of a security solution in our critical infrastructure, such as Fortinet Secure SD-WAN, has become essential."

Likewise, Koper highlights the confidence of having the Fortinet support team at his side: "It's a partnership that allows the Sullair team to rely on assistance in case of any problems, to capably manage updates and incorporate any improvements to the existing solution. This ensures Sullair is always on the technological cutting edge and offers fast reaction times for customers."

### Solutions

- Fortinet Secure SD-WAN
- FortiManager

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