Tulare County Information & Communications Technology Department

Executive Summary: Project Foxtrot Fire App

Overview: The Project Foxtrot Fire App allows Tulare County's Fire Department to access a centralized database of geographical information.

Challenge: When safety personnel within Tulare County's Fire Department respond to a call, they are faced with a wide range of very dangerous variables. The fire they are sent to combat may be contained to a single location or it may have spread to neighboring buildings. The physical access to the site of the blaze may be made difficult by geographical details like culs-de-sac, unpaved roads and security fences. The construction details of the site on fire could vary depending on building materials, the possible presence of livestock and proximity to hazardous chemicals. Fire hydrants may or may not be located near the property. All of these variables create uncertainty on the part of safety personnel. And in a field that requires snap judgments in the face of exceptional danger, uncertainty can be deadly.

Innovative Solution: Geographical information had long been collected on first-hand observational trips around the County and stored on hand-written notes. These methods of data collection and storage proved unsophisticated at best and seriously dangerous at worst. If location information had been improperly filed or included out-of-date information, safety personnel responding to a call would be at a serious disadvantage.

To promote greater efficiency and accuracy, Tulare County Information & Communications Technology (TCiCT) worked with Fire to synthesize and modernize this data while simultaneously making it more accessible to the appropriate safety personnel. This app, dubbed Project Foxtrot, used up-to-date Geographical Information Systems (G.I.S.) address points to augment existing data. This data has been translated into digital form and can now be accessed by County fire employees on both stationary and mobile devices. As such this vital information can be accessed quickly while en route to a call. With these important contextual details secured, Fire personnel can better plan for emergency situations.

Originality: Other counties still rely on a scattered collection of analog notes. Tulare County's Fire Department stands alone in its mobile collection and utilization of geographical data in the service of public safety.

Cost-Effectiveness: Data for this application has been sourced from notes collected by the Fire Department and checked for accuracy by modern technological means. The transposition of this data to a digital format took TCiCT less than a single week of regular work hours to complete. There were no external equipment or labor costs necessary for this process; the swiftness with which this process was completed makes it easily replicable to other counties as well.

Results: By using existing digital data rather than individual trips to sites, this app helped Tulare County Fire save over 1,000 work-hours. Additionally, the introduction of this app utilized current servers and infrastructure saved the Fire Department roughly $12,000 as their analog method of data collection would have necessitated a costly server upgrade. The Fire Department can now easily coordinate emergency planning and assess the types of vehicles, staff and equipment required to mitigate hazards in crisis situations. Furthermore, the Fire App allows for more than 4,000 Tulare County homes to be remotely evaluated for fire protection and prevention plans, bringing a new level of safety to the area.

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