



GIS on BlackBerry® Brings Quick Situational Awareness of Public Safety Concerns for Coastal City

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- David Endelman, GIS Coordinator



City of Oxnard, CA uses mobile GIS technology to bring situational awareness to managers

Organization Description: The City of Oxnard is a coastal city in California. Regular monitoring of City waterways, including storm drainage canals is an important municipal operation that involves regular field inspection and reporting by mobile City employees.

Challenge

City inspectors in Oxnard, CA have traditionally performed inspection work by recording observations with paper and pen. Paper-based data collection, however, limits the amount of information one can practically collect about a given situation. Consistency of data is also a challenge because individuals record information in their own unique way. Paper forms also initiate a series of labor-intense operational procedures back at the office.

These factors delay the flow of collected data to City managers and officials, which can hinder their ability to respond quickly, or completely, to problems encountered in the community. The potential impact of this delay can be hazardous in a coastal city like Oxnard. According to David Endelman, Oxnard’s GIS Coordinator, there was a need to become more “situationally aware” by finding a solution that could provide City managers with more timely, higher quality insight into potential problems as they are discovered.

Solution

Freeance™ Mobile software on BlackBerry is providing the solution the City sought. Specifically, it’s been deployed as a data collection tool to assist in the inspection and clearing of storm drainage channels. Using the BlackBerry smartphones, workers in the field

can now take photographs of any problems in the storm channels, and record critical data about the event using an easy-to-navigate form, which is custom-built using the Freeance application.

Once data is entered and a photograph taken, the information is geo-coded and immediately uploaded to the City’s ESRI® server, giving managers and elected officials virtually instant insight into what’s going on in their City.

“It’s the integration of three technologies that makes this work,” Endelman explains. “GPS-enabled BlackBerry smartphones, our ESRI ArcGIS® Server, and Freeance Mobile, the software that ties it all together.”

Results

Situational Awareness Enhances Safety

Geo-coded images of storm drain debris are helping the City identify areas of potential safety risk in advance. The data and images provide a more complete picture of the debris situation to help determine where the trash might be coming from. Endelman says the inspection of the storm channels has increased safety and the City’s ability to respond. “It’s helping us keep waterways and surrounding areas safer,” he says.

New Operational Efficiency for Governments

Endelman says Oxnard’s storm channel clean up is representative of a whole new world of opportunity in terms of time and cost savings for local government. “From an efficiency standpoint, Freeance Mobile certainly has the potential to eliminate a lot of paper-based processes within local governments. This faster data flow certainly speeds up decision making in operational issues,” he says.

Technology Profile

Freeance Software	Freeance Mobile 2.2 - Pro Edition
BlackBerry Solution	BlackBerry Enterprise Server v. 4.1 5 BlackBerry Tour 9630 smartphones
ESRI Software	ArcGIS Server 9.3.1 Standard - Enterprise Edition
Wireless Carrier(s)	Verizon
Database Software	SQL Server 2000

For a more detailed explanation of the Freeance Mobile solution in place at City of Oxnard, request the complete Case Study Article at http://www.freeance.com/product_mobile_info.php