

NEW JERSEY AGENCIES RELY ON SPILLMAN FLEX DURING SUPERSTORM SANDY

The Monmouth County Sheriff's Office and Toms River Police Department used Spillman Flex software to efficiently respond to a record-setting amount of calls for service during Superstorm Sandy on Oct. 29, 2012. The software also aided in the planning and logistics of cleanup after the storm. For Monmouth, the newly implemented Flex system was reliable throughout the course of the superstorm and assisted the agency in planning rescues, responding to calls, and keeping field personnel safe. Personnel at Toms River used their Flex system to keep the community informed by gathering and reporting information about the condition of homes hit by the storm.

THE CHALLENGE

During the evening of Oct. 29, 2012, Superstorm Sandy moved up the Eastern Seaboard, shattering records for wind speed, wave height, and storm surge. The storm hit two of the most densely populated counties in New Jersey, Monmouth and Ocean, causing an estimated \$29.4 billion in damage. Officials at Monmouth County Sheriff's Office reported receiving a record number of calls for service, including calls for difficult water rescues. They needed to decide how to conduct the rescues efficiently and safely with limited manpower. After the storm, the nearby Toms River Police Department faced the difficult task of sifting through the wreckage and helping citizens determine the status of their homes.

ENHANCED DECISION-MAKING USING FLEX CAD MAPPING

Monmouth County Sheriff Shaun Golden said that Spillman Flex enabled his office to respond efficiently to a record 7,700 calls for service that they received during the night of the superstorm. That number included 94 calls for water rescues, something Golden says was one of the biggest challenges the agency faced that night. Water rescues require the

expertise of the specially-trained and outfitted Monmouth County Sheriff's Office Dive Team. Since only a select few members of the dive team were available to help at any given moment, the office had to be strategic in where and how they were dispatched. Flex's Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) Mapping and Mobile Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL) Mapping modules facilitated this by showing dispatchers and administrators where dive team members were located in real time, as well as where rescues were needed. The ability to see where water rescue calls were clustered allowed dive teams to be dispatched in a strategic manner, saving time and, most importantly, lives.

"Spillman Flex allowed us to really get us a good picture through the CAD map and the AVL," Golden said. "It helped management get a feel for all the calls coming in."

RELIABLE SYSTEM, RESPONSIBLE VENDOR

The Monmouth County Sheriff's Office operates two major 911 centers: Freehold Center and ShoreCom, which dispatch for a number of agencies within the county. Golden said that on the night of the storm, the Flex systems at both locations experienced no downtime. The public safety software system

MONMOUTH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE (NJ)

Multi-Jurisdictional Setting

53 agencies sharing data

Sworn Officers

460

Civilian Employees

140

Population Served

More than 631,000 residents

www.monmouthsheriff.org

TOMS RIVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

Sworn Officers

165

Civilian Employees

29

Population Served

More than 90,000 residents

www.trpolice.org



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was built with a redundant server to ensure the software worked correctly during times of crisis or natural disaster. This allowed the system to remain functional the night of the storm despite the heavy influx of calls.

Representatives from Flex called the office throughout the night to check in and make sure the software was functioning during the natural disaster, Golden said.

“The Spillman Flex system support team went above and beyond during the worst catastrophic event to hit our county, calling our sheriff’s office IT staff a number of times to just check in to see if there was anything they could do, even though all systems were working,” he said. “In our biggest time of crisis, Spillman Flex was there for us, not only with a reliable and redundant public safety software system but with personal and professional customer service.”

NAVIGATING AN UNRECOGNIZABLE LANDSCAPE WITH MOBILE

In Toms River, Flex’s dispatch and mapping solutions played a critical role in helping evacuated residents learn whether their homes had survived the superstorm, said former Toms River Police Chief Mike Mastronardy.

For safety and security reasons, many families had to stay out of evacuated areas along the barrier island for two weeks after the storm. Unable to access their homes, families were left wondering what had happened to their neighborhoods and if they would have houses to return to. Toms River Police Department used Flex’s Mobile and CAD mapping functionality to plot the locations of homes in these areas.

“As a chief, I can tell you that it was invaluable to identify missing homes,” Mastronardy said.

Mastronardy said that many people tried to use what they could, including television footage and flyover images of their neighborhoods, to determine the status of their homes. Because the storm left some places unrecognizable, these sources were not enough to confirm the status of houses and structures. The department even had to account for houses that were pushed off their foundations and came to rest at other locations, which further confused cleanup efforts.

“In Ortleigh Beach, over 50 homes were just totally missing from their respective lots and foundations,” he said. “The area was unrecognizable, with homes and street signs gone.”

Flex’s Mobile AVL Mapping module provided Toms River Police Department with the necessary tools to navigate completely unrecognizable neighborhoods. The electronic maps were created using data from tax information on the homes in the community, including address, size, and occupant information—all vital information that helps authorities identify homes after a destructive event. Mastronardy said that using the Flex maps, his department was able to identify missing homes and pass that information along to the victims. The software also helped the agency respond to concerns such as gas and water leaks, which could be researched on the maps from a patrol car laptop.

CONCLUSION

Access to critical, timely information helped Monmouth County Sheriff’s Office and Toms River Police Department serve their communities during one of the biggest natural disasters to hit New Jersey in recorded history. Monmouth County’s Spillman Flex system helped provide personnel with a clear, complete picture of how to best allocate resources. Toms River Police Department used Flex to find out what happened to neighborhoods that stood in the path of the storm.

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