

LG Products Improve Efficiency and Save Lives in Whiteside County

Whiteside County, Illinois



One of the challenges facing rescue workers in Whiteside County, Illinois, is the fact that often, the street address is only part of the story.

Next comes finding the actual residence which, in this rural county, may be a mile from the roadway. In fact, the average farm in Whiteside County is 379 acres.

Having the lay of the land before they arrive on the property saves responders precious seconds. Today, thanks to Geographic Technologies Group's LGdispatch and LGmobile, rescuers can proceed with confidence and reach citizens faster than ever.



"We were using a DOS-based mapping system with our Sungard-HTE CAD program, but it was no longer going to be supported," said Karl Kovarik, the County's 911 Coordinator. "The County has a GIS system, so the LG products were a logical choice for us."

County officials researched the products, watched a web-based demonstration, and made the decision to purchase the applications. Installation followed quickly.

"One of the first things we did was ask the County GIS Department to create a private drive layer in addition to the centerline layer and to add an address point for each building site. In many cases, the buildings are set so far back from the road that it's impossible to know where we're needed. The information on this layer is tremendously helpful to us," Kovarik said.

Another useful layer is the one showing on which parcels hazardous materials are located. GIS personnel created hash marks on the parcels indicating the presence of hazardous materials, so emergency personnel will be warned in advance of that potential complication.

"A DOS map is flat, of course, so there are only so many things you can do to make it more useful," Kovarik said, "but the usefulness of the maps from LGdispatch is unlimited. We can create layers for every dimension we think might help us serve our citizens better."

The Whiteside County Sheriff's Department shares the responsibility for responding to emergencies with two municipalities. Police departments in the cities of Sterling and Rock Falls dispatch police units for each

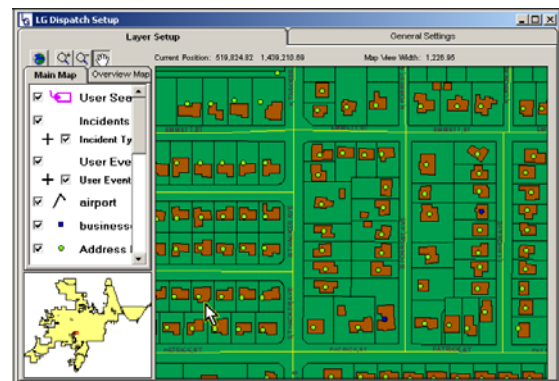
jurisdiction, while CGH Medical Center dispatches ambulances and fire trucks to these two cities. They often dispatch both to the scene of accidents—ambulances to tend to the injuries and fire trucks to direct traffic. Emergencies in the rest of the County are dispatched by the Whiteside County Sheriff's Department.

At the Sterling Police Department, the dispatchers report to Claudia Garcia, the Support Services Supervisor.

"The reaction to LGdispatch has been extremely positive," she said. "Since the location of the call shows up immediately on the map, we know their location even if the caller disconnects before telling us where they are."

Garcia said LGdispatch has also played a critical role in another of her department's responsibilities: tracking registered sex offenders.

"They are required to check in with the dispatchers when they establish a residence here, and of course, there are restrictions on how close child sex offenders can live to areas children are frequently found, like schools and playgrounds. This software is extremely accurate and we can put their location on the map and instantly see whether they are in compliance."



Garcia and her staff are also often asked to produce maps for the State Attorney's office when prosecutors are preparing to try drug cases. The Illinois Controlled Substances Act prescribes mandatory prison terms for selling drugs within 1,000 feet of places such as schools, churches, public housing and parks.

"The prosecutor will ask for aerial photographs showing the scene of the crime and its distance from the nearest school. Using LGdispatch, we can give them an exact distance."

While Garcia's staff responds to police emergencies in Sterling, medical and fire emergencies in Sterling and Rock Falls are handled by dispatchers at CGH Medical Center.

Brandon Miller is the dispatch coordinator for the medical center. His department includes 40 professionals who respond to more than 5,000 calls each year.

"We were initially just a hospital-based ambulance service, but we've evolved, and now we also handle calls for the fire departments," Miller said. "We have two workstations with LGdispatch, and it's an integral part of our workflow."

"For us, the software's biggest benefit is its ability to instantly tell us which district the emergency call is from, so we know who to dispatch," he said.

“Before, we only had hand-drawn maps, and the district boundaries were confusing to follow. It was a huge issue for us.”

Miller also serves on the Whiteside County 911 Board, which gives him a complete overview of all emergency response efforts in the County.

“LGdispatch has definitely made an impact here for several agencies. Just yesterday we had a case that would have been extremely difficult to respond to without it. We got a call for an ambulance at an address where there was no road sign, and the house was unmarked. Because the dispatchers could enter the address into the system and see where the house was, they were able to give better directions to the drivers and get them there quickly.”

“It’s a whole lot better than the drivers having to look at the paper copies they used to carry,” Miller said.

Kovarik said having multiple agencies responding to emergencies could result in confusion and duplication of effort, but in Whiteside County, all of the agencies work closely and communicate openly, ironing out conflicts before they become problems. LGdispatch has facilitated the process.

“The important thing is that the citizens know we can reach them in case of an emergency, regardless of what jurisdiction they live in or how far out in the country they live,” Kovarik said. “I think we’re all really proud of the system we have here.”

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