

Xora Case Study

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— Kevin Vargas, Supervisor, Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District

Greater LA County Vector Control District

Situation

Battling black flies and wrestling with mosquitoes that carry West Nile Virus is all in a day's work for Greater Los Angeles County's Vector Control District and its 70-plus field staff. Its suppression activities help prevent disease-carrying, flying pests from infecting the county's 4.8 million residents, and also protect property values and commercial enterprises by keeping insect occurrence and activity down. The District's personnel also make up the largest of the five area vector-control districts.

Working either individually or in teams, the District's field personnel conduct numerous site suppressions every day. Methods of suppression include clearing vegetation and standing water sources, and administering chemical insecticides. Operating out of two facilities, the mobile workers are managed by a team of three supervisors charged with the effective monitoring of 1,300 square miles.

Challenges

Until recently, the District's biggest challenge was that it had no means of ensuring that its far-flung field staff were performing their assigned suppression tasks. Field staff efficiency was further hampered by the county's notorious traffic jams. Because it had no way of knowing its employees' locations, the District couldn't implement a just-in-time resupply process. The inability to determine field employees' exact locations and confirm their status also presented safety and security issues.

In an attempt to improve communications and employee accountability, the District provided its field staff with cell phones. The phones facilitated routine communica-

tions, but did not give supervisors any way of determining whether their field workers' progress reports were accurate. Especially in regard to its seasonal employees, the District wanted a way of verifying that they were completing their day-to-day assignments.

Solution

The Xora solution seemed like an ideal fit for the District. “We decided to implement Xora primarily for its ability to track our field staff. We can monitor their performance, get supplies to them right when they are needed, and enhance employee safety and security,” said Kevin Vargas, a District supervisor.

“All a supervisor has to do is log on to the Web to get visual information on all of our employees' locations. The beauty is that Xora determines in a snap whether employees are where they should be, and if they're doing assigned tasks.” Vargas noted that by providing this confirmation, the system also gives transparency to the District's disciplinary procedures, and makes them more fair.

Results

The District's supervisors especially like Xora's grouping feature. “This feature allows us to give teamwork assignments, in which three-person teams are working out of different vehicles. We can see how the teams are progressing throughout the day, and if an employee needs assistance, we can determine immediately who the closest team member is, and direct them to assist as needed,” Vargas said.

The District also uses Xora's mapping and direction functions to help its field personnel skirt around Los Angeles County's

ubiquitous traffic jams as they move from one assigned area to the next—and to find the paths of least resistance when workers head back to the office at day's end.

Xora promotes safe driving practices, too. “A ‘photo cop’ had apparently caught a District employee running a red light. But the photo wasn't all that clear, and the employee denied being there,” Vargas said. “However, Xora records time, date, and location information on all of our field employees, so we compared our info with the photo cop's time, date, and location info, and they were a dead match. The employee ‘fessed up and paid the fine. My sense is that this incident really got the attention of other employees, and that they'll likely exercise a little more caution in their own ‘intersection management’ practices.”

Vargas says Xora's tracking feature also provided a pleasant surprise when one of the District's phones was stolen. “The District has an educational school bus that's designed to teach kids about mosquito control; one of the kids at the school we were visiting stole a District phone off the bus. We nabbed him by using Xora to track the phone to a specific street address; it happened to be the student's home.”

Through the implementation of Xora, the District has a complete solution that addresses all of the District's most immediate needs in regard to its mobile field personnel. The solution helps supervisors better track employees throughout the day, improves timelines for keeping supplies stocked, and even aides greatly in the resolution of unexpected situations like theft.

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