

UK fire and rescue services select Cadcorp GIS software

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority has recently contracted with Computer Aided Development Corporation Ltd (Cadcorp) for the supply of a corporate geographic information system, bringing the number of UK fire and rescue services using Cadcorp GIS software to 41.



Cadcorp won the multi-year contract in open competition and will supply and implement a GIS solution comprising a number of licences of Map Modeller desktop software and Web Map Layers, Cadcorp's web mapping application. Training and consultancy services are also included and support and maintenance will be provided for the lifetime of the contract.

Nicola Smith, Business and Intelligence Performance Manager at Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS), said, "Accurate and timely analysis of geographic information assists us in identifying trends and understanding risk in the communities we serve. The new system will greatly expand the reach of geographic information in the service, taking it outside of the Business Intelligence and Performance group. We are establishing a web mapping service which will enable anyone to access maps along with a range of geographic information via our intranet. The end result will be that users will experience a more efficient and more effective service which will free up business and intelligence personnel to focus on more complex analytical tasks using desktop licences."

Mike O'Neil, CEO at Cadcorp, commented, "Fire and rescue services are under incredible pressure to do more with less, and to do so without compromising the safety of either the public or fire and rescue service personnel. We believe that by sharing geographic information through an easy-to-use and web based self-service model, CFRS will be able to achieve this goal."

Data sharing

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) also rolled out a Cadcorp corporate GIS last year, and is now adding specialised desktop GIS software for resource planning and

performance reporting.

Tracy King, GIS Officer at ECFRS, said, "Until two years ago, we were using GIS in a very limited way. The Performance and Data Department had two licences of Cadcorp SIS desktop software, and there were a number of GIS products in other departments. However, they were being used in a fragmented, autonomous and uncoordinated way. There was little sharing of technology and little sharing of data. Starting 2012, we developed a business case to consolidate our GIS solutions. Two years later we had put in place a centralised spatial data store on SQL Server; extended the number of desktop SIS licences; rolled out a web GIS which can now be accessed by 1600 staff throughout the service; put in place an embedded web mapping tool to our incident recording system and we are sharing maps with our command and control system on a large video display."

A key part of the consolidation exercise was to identify a supplier for an intranet GIS. Cadcorp was selected in open competition from a shortlist of five GIS vendors. Tracy explains, "We place a lot of value on the ability of Cadcorp SIS to read and write spatial data, whatever the format. We have had GIS in the past where the only way to import data was to employ consultants who knew how to work with a particular proprietary data format. That's simply not sustainable when a fire service is experiencing cuts to its budget. With Cadcorp SIS we can import data in many formats in the knowledge that the GIS software will take care of its export to, and management in, SQL Server."

The web GIS is already being used throughout the service, in many different ways. Tracy continues, "Probably the most widely used operation is to search by address and view a map centred on that address. We are also seeing

the value of using the application to merge our own data with that of partner agencies. We take crime data from the police and flood data from the Environment Agency and bring this together with our own data to support risk assessment and emergency planning."

Incident recording

The same GIS software which is behind this multi-purpose web GIS is also being used to power other systems in ECFRS. Tracy explains, "We use Cadcorp's geospatial web services engine – GeognoSIS – to provide us with a map based front end to our incident recording system (IRS). An IRS user can now view the recorded location of an incident against a map, and if the recorded location is not sufficiently accurate, they can amend it online. Similarly, GeognoSIS is enabling us to publish maps as WMS layers into our command and control system. Controllers can now overlay and switch on map layers covering features such as highway marker posts, road junction numbers, fire hydrants and flood zones."

Workload Modeller

ECFRS has recently acquired the Workload Modeller from Cadcorp. Tracy said, "We have to prepare for changes in the service and this resource planning and performance monitoring application will be invaluable. It will help us relate the spatial distribution of our resources with the spatial distribution of known risk and help to break our dependency on external contractors to provide us with this analysis. Remodelling the way we deploy our resources is not a one time activity. We need to constantly review the impact of any changes we make. Workload Modeller will provide us with this interactive capability, in-house."

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Tracy King, GIS Officer at Essex County Fire and Rescue Service