



Case Study

San Diego Floods

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SAN DIEGO FLOODS CASE STUDY

San Diego Floods

El Niño drenched San Diego with several heavy rainstorms leading up to Jan 6/7. Streets were flooded, some to depths of several feet deep, causing vehicles to be trapped when trying to get through intersections. People who tried to cross streams or rivers became trapped in life threatening situations and had to be rescued.



San Diego Fire Department & Lifeguard Services

The San Diego Fire-Rescue Department (SDFD) is responsible for all fire, emergency medical, lifeguard and emergency management services, headed by Fire Chief Brian Fennessy. San Diego Fire-Rescue Department had used CommandWear's Situational Awareness product for several major events in 2015 and found it very useful in tracking paramedics who were out of their vehicles.

The San Diego Lifeguard Service's mission is to provide for the public the highest quality of service in the coastal and aquatic environment through prevention, education and outreach programs, rescue, emergency medical care, beach management, and law enforcement. Professional lifeguarding in the City of San Diego started in 1918 with 5 lifeguards in Ocean Beach and Mission Beach. Today there are close to 300 lifeguards, making San Diego's one of the largest professional lifeguard services in the United States.¹

The Situation

The heavy rains led the department to deploy the lifeguard teams inland to help with rescuing people trapped by the floods. The Lifeguard vehicles were normally not tracked and this was causing a problem for deploying the lifeguards. Command would not be able to see where they were. Chief Fennessy asked how they were going to track the lifeguards in the field. Captain Karl Becker informed him that they had used CommandWear successfully to track responders in past events and that he had 15 rugged smartphones loaded with CommandWear's mobile app that he could give the Lifeguards to track their position.

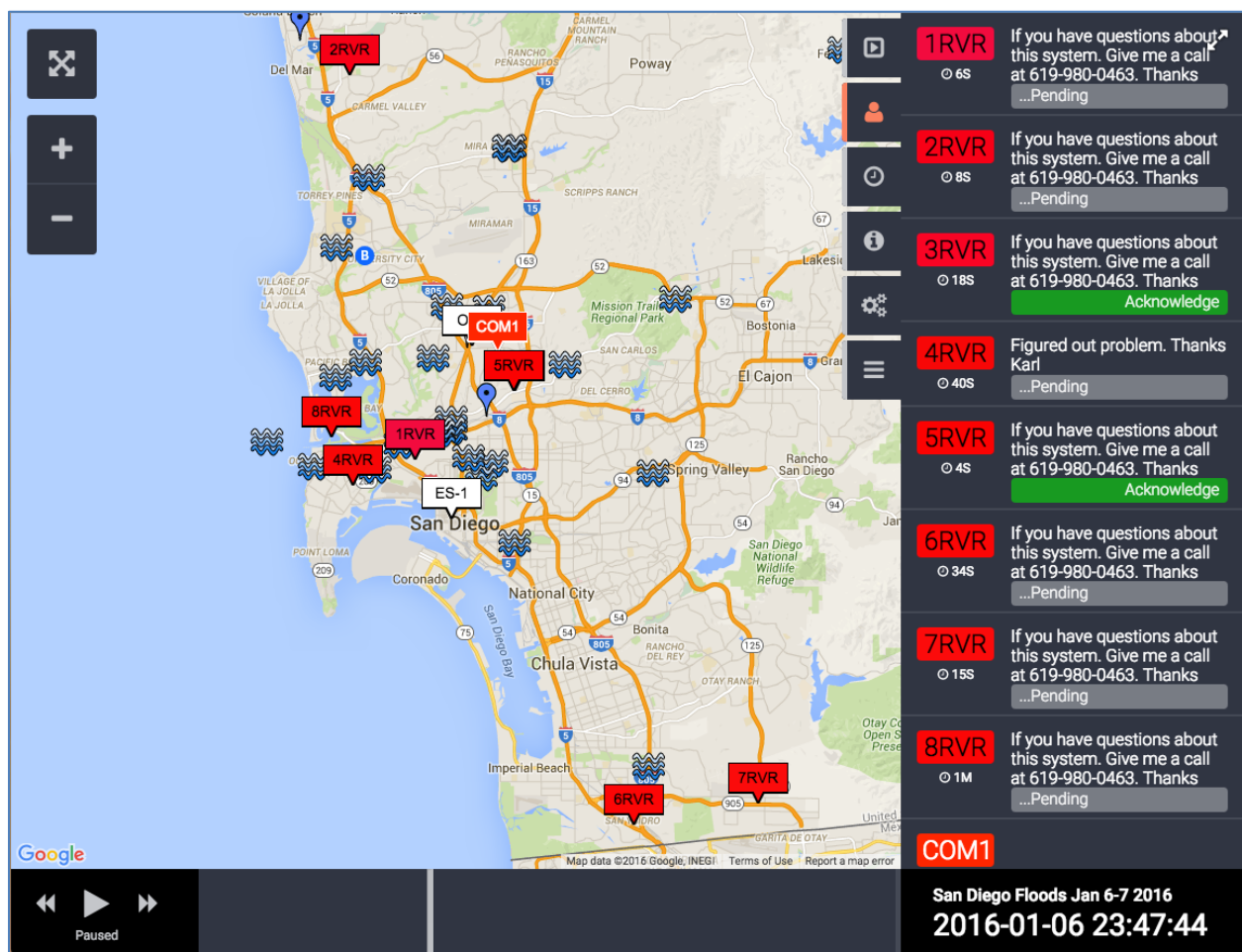
Within a couple of hours Captain Becker had charged the phones, updated the call signs (that appear on map icons) and handed out the devices to the teams. The worsening situation necessitated just handing out the phones to the lifeguards with minimal instruction.

¹ <http://www.sandiego.gov/lifeguards/about/overview.shtml>

The Outcome

For the first time, and with almost no setup time, San Diego was able to track the location of all the lifeguard teams in the Departmental Operation Center (DOC). They were able to track the 8 teams during the storm.

When an incident was reported, a unit could be dispatched immediately because they knew exactly where the unit was. Previously, they lost valuable time by having to call everyone up on the radio, get each responder to report their location, mark it on maps and then dispatch the nearest responder and also send backup.



CommandWear's Commander Application Displays Real-time Responder Locations

River rescue

The Lifeguards came across an incident involving people trapped in the river. Helicopters were overhead but lost sight of the lifeguards in the brush adjacent to the river. However, CommandWear clearly displayed the lifeguards' locations, with 10 second GPS updates, to allow the DOC and Dispatch to monitor the situation, get backup resources in place as needed and keep responders' safe during life rescue operations.

Findings

San Diego Fire-Rescue debriefed CommandWear Systems Inc and highlighted these key findings:

1. The San Diego Lifeguards are planning to distribute waterproof smartphones, such as the Sonim XP7 Android smartphones, to all the lifeguard teams in future. This will allow their personnel to be tracked even if they are in the water.
2. The quick setup and deployment with minimal training enabled the system to be used in an emergency.
3. The ability to see everyone's location in or out of the vehicle enabled Dispatch and DOC personnel to manage resources even more effectively and enhance responder safety.
4. In the future, field Commanders with an iPad would be able to see where their people are (in addition to DOC and Dispatch – so everyone would have a common operating picture).
5. The ability to send pictures through CommandWear's smartphone app to give Command and Dispatch unprecedented insights into the situation from the frontlines would be very valuable.
6. Everything that happens is now recorded using CommandWear and can be played back visually in the future. This 'Replay' capability can be used for debriefs and training including showing responders situations where resources could be deployed in a more efficient manner in the future.

"In the future, we will want to have waterproof smartphones on everyone so we can see them both in and out of their vehicle. It's about safety - especially if someone enters the water and gets washed downstream. We want to know where they are."

Captain Karl Becker

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