

URBAN SHIELD CASE STUDY



PREPARATION. READINESS. EXECUTION.

THE CHALLENGE

Urban Shield organizes a yearly event that tests the preparedness of first responders to deal with disasters and emergencies. This event coordinates multiple training scenarios throughout the Bay Area, targeting the needs of different first responders, from fire and SWAT, to EMTs and other medical professionals.

The level of organization and communication necessary to keep the event running smoothly and on time is daunting. In addition to managing multiple groups engaging in different training scenarios across a large region, the Urban Shield command staff need to be able to quickly address rapidly changing circumstances and group needs in real time. To accomplish this, they need tools for effective mass communication and centralized task assignment.

Urban Shield requires a central command center that can effectively manage communication between individuals and groups, track personnel and vehicles, and document the required reports and debriefing materials necessary for a successful event.

THE SOLUTION

Mission Manager addresses all of these needs in a single, streamlined software solution. It acts as a centralized command system from which Urban Shield organizers can communicate with groups and individuals, track and monitor incidents, assign tasks in real time, and manage debriefing and documentation in a single location. The convenient Mission Manager smartphone app allows users scattered over a large region to easily check in for up-to-the-minute information and simplifies the upload process for reports from the field. Best of all, Mission Manager is user-friendly and intuitive, so it requires minimal initial training.

THE RESULTS

- Faster, centralized messaging
- Real-time incident monitoring
- Efficient task assignment
- Incident debriefing and mapping capabilities
- Convenient smart phone app for users

BACKGROUND

Urban Shield holds a massive yearly training event for first responders in the Bay Area. This event organizes specialized training exercises designed to test the preparedness of first responders for various disaster scenarios with the goal of minimizing loss of life during actual emergencies.

This year's Urban Shield event, which took place on September 9-12 in the Bay Area, included roughly 35 high-intensity training scenarios. These training scenarios were targeted to multiple types of first responders, including fire, SWAT, EMS (emergency management services), and triage. Each scenario gave these groups a chance to practice their skills in real-world, high pressure situations. Because the event involved targeted training scenarios for a variety of first responders, multiple trainings took place over a large regional area, from Walnut Creek to the San Francisco Bay.

The Urban Shield training event is invaluable because it allows first responders and organizations to assess their planning, protocols, equipment, technology, and overall readiness for a variety of natural disasters and emergencies. Some of the disaster scenarios included in past training events were a passenger train crash and multiple types of urban terrorist attacks. It has grown over the last ten years to include international participants and observers, as well as a tradeshow with vendors and exhibits.

The 2017 Urban Shield event will be the first time that the participating first responders will be able to directly test different products and technologies as part of the training. The first responder teams will give feedback on the products used in the training scenarios to help improve the usefulness and reliability of technology in real world scenarios. Chris Stevens, a Mission Manager technical expert and trained search and rescue first responder, and Larry Willes of Mission Manager both attended this year's event to determine how the Mission Manager software could contribute to streamlining the organization of this huge event in the future. "Mission Manager is the perfect all-in-one command center for a large-scale, complex event like Urban Shield," Stevens stated. "Command staff can easily track all scenarios and personnel remotely while those on the ground can report back in real time, streamlining everyone's job and eliminating many of the redundancies of traditional emergency response protocols."

THE CHALLENGE

Coordinating a large-scale event that involves multiple groups of people, VIPs, locations, and individual event schedules requires effective communication and organization at all levels. Mission Manager staff worked together with the Urban Shield staff at this year's event to identify the specific areas where they could use help preparing, organizing, and running the 2017 event.



Urban Shield personnel must be able to quickly disseminate information to multiple groups concerning real-time changes in transportation routes or event schedules, as well as designate small-scale tasks to individuals, such as delivering bottled water or supplying power generators to specific locations upon request. To accomplish this, Urban Shield needs a streamlined messaging system that will allow them to quickly communicate between different groups simultaneously and assign new tasks to individuals as needed.

Urban Shield command staff also need to be able to effectively track vehicles and map individual training events throughout the Bay area during the event. In order to keep things running smoothly and stay on schedule, organizers need the ability to address issues with traffic in real time, keep all participants up to date with the current routes and plans, and ensure that the individual training events begin and end at the designated times.

Finally, Urban Shield has a multitude of forms and debriefing materials that must be available to participants during and after training scenarios. These forms require significant time and labor to fill out and enter into the appropriate databases to document the training results. A streamlined method that allows individual users to upload their information and results electronically would greatly minimize the time spent on this part of event facilitation.



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– Mission Manager staff

THE SOLUTION

Mission Manager offers a one-stop solution to all of these problems in an efficient, user-friendly software program. It allows users to communicate via an internal messaging system across multiple platforms, maps locations of ongoing incidents, tracks personnel involved in different activities, and offers tools to generate reports and debriefing material automatically.

In particular, it was clear during this year’s event that instantaneous messaging to multiple groups would have helped deal with the traffic and safety issues caused by protesters near the Urban Shield tradeshow. Mission Manager staff observed how a group of protesters was blocking the entrance route of the Urban Shield vans transporting VIPs to the show. “Using the Mission Manager app, command staff could have easily messaged all the drivers with a new route that avoided the protesters and ensured the safe and timely arrival of VIPs,” the staff member explained. The Mission Manager software would allow them to send this information quickly and efficiently to all drivers with just a few clicks.

In another instance, water bottles needed to be delivered to a specific site during the 2016 event, but there was no clear way to find someone to take care of this. Time was spent calling the Alameda Sheriff’s department to locate someone who was available. With Mission Manager, Stevens noted, “all Urban Shield staff would need to do is create a new task in the app, assign an individual to the task, and that person would be notified immediately with instructions—it’s as simple as that. Our Urban Shield partners really appreciated the streamlined nature of assigning and monitoring tasks through Mission Manager.”

Once the task is completed and marked as such in the app, the creator of the task is automatically notified. These are just two examples of the numerous ways that Mission Manager software can help the Urban Shield staff work more effectively and stay organized.



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When presented with all that the Mission Manager software offers, the Urban Shield command staff were very excited by its capabilities and features. According to Stevens, “we determined that the smart phone app is of particular benefit to Urban Shield participants on the ground during training scenarios: in real time, they can check in and report any completed tasks or performance metrics while in the field, enabling command staff to track activity remotely.” The 2016 Urban Shield command was convinced that the Mission Manager software will help streamline the 2017 event coordination by providing a centralized command center.



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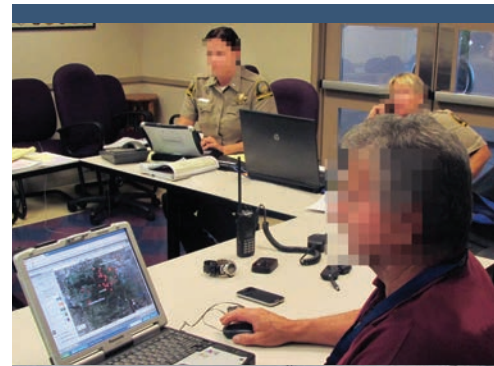
– Chris Stevens, Mission Manager Tech Expert

HOW MISSION MANAGER CAN HELP URBAN SHIELD

■ **COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION:** Mission Manager will enable Urban Shield staff to easily communicate and coordinate the schedules of VIPs throughout the conference so they can get to where they are needed most. Messages can be sent out through the software with up-to-the-minute information to help personnel avoid traffic and security issues and safely re-route VIPs. The messaging system enables notification via email, text message, and/or phone call (computer-generated message), thus helping to ensure that all recipients receive the message in a timely manner. Event vehicles at different training scenarios can be tracked across the Bay Area where the event is held. The messaging system also has pre-written, standard messages for quick use and a “Request Response” feature that enables the sender to request a reply from recipients. In the received message, a recipient can easily click and respond “yes” or “no” to simple questions or RSVP requests. Plus, all message history can be exported, which allows for easier reporting later.

■ **MAPPING AND INCIDENT DEBRIEFING:** Mission Manager can provide a map of the event training area that can be customized with different zones and details for the training personnel and participants. Urban Shield could use this to visually map out different training exercises for groups by color coding hot zones, indicating where victims or specific incidents occurred, and even giving instructions, such as where barricades should be placed or command posts located. The mapping feature also enables users to upload surveillance photographs, measure the distance between important objects, and provides latitude and longitude information for the exact determination of search zones and incident locations. After training exercises, Urban Shield can use this mapping feature to debrief teams on their performance on a map output that displays the team’s movements and actions to help improve logistics and response time.

■ **MANAGING INCIDENTS AND PERSONNEL:** Because Mission Manager has a convenient smart phone app, individuals at different training locations throughout the Bay Area can check in using the app. Not only will this allow the Urban Shield staff to monitor how long an individual is at an incident scene, but it will also allow them to track their movement within the incident. All of this information is crucial for an accurate assessment of the first responders’ readiness and their performance during the training events. The Mission Manager software also keeps track of all personnel involved in an incident and can automatically generate a report for a single individual, which would be incredibly useful feedback for individual training participants.



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■ **EVENT LOG:** Mission Manager software automatically keeps a record of every action reported during an event for the Urban Shield staff. If personnel or training participants check in or out of a training scenario, complete their mission, or send an important message, the event log will record it. Later, this can be exported as a report, eliminating the need for manual tabulation of every single action associated with an incident.

■ **DOCUMENTATION AND REPORTS:** With Mission Manager, the Urban Shield staff and event participants would no longer have to manually complete and submit Incident Command System Reports (ICS) because the forms are pre-loaded into and auto-populated by the software. Individuals can also access and complete the forms

themselves through MissionManager.net and then email them to the appropriate parties. In addition to pre-loaded report forms, other important resources such as Team evaluations and site surveys can also be loaded onto the software.

■ **RAPID TRAINING AND IMPLEMENTATION:** One of the best parts of Mission Manager software is the minimal training and set-up required before it can be implemented. Only a single tutorial of less than an hour is needed to train new users. Personnel and attendee information can be easily imported from existing CSV files directly into the software to populate information fields. Urban Shield staff particularly appreciated the software's ease-of-use, and the minimal learning curve required by Mission Manager.

