LEALMAN FIRE DISTRICT CASE STUDY

Saving Lives Protecting Property
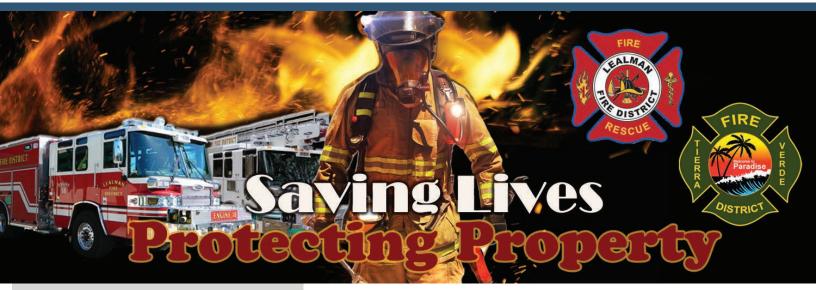
THE CHALLENGE

As the central communication point during disaster response in Pinellas County, Florida, the Lealman Fire District is in charge of managing multiple Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs). The district hosts training events and keeps track of personnel information for the CERT program, which educates and organizes volunteers to support first responders during disaster events.

To accomplish this organizational feat, the Lealman Fire District was left utilizing a variety of computer-based databases that required time-consuming manual updates by the program manager. They also had no way of efficiently managing the paperwork and record-keeping necessary for large-scale incident training exercises.

Lealman Fire District needed a centralized database to keep updated CERT personnel information, file incident reports, enable swift group communication, assign and track missions, log volunteer hours, and manage assets. They also needed to be able to coordinate all of this information across CERT programs in eight counties as part of the Tampa Bay-Urban Area Security Initiative (TB-UASI) Citizen Corps Working Group.

THE SOLUTION

Mission Manager addressed all of the Lealman Fire District and TB-UASI needs in a single software program. The software centralized their communications and record-keeping in a single team account that included all members of CERT programs in the eight counties served by TB-UASI. This has saved hours of time for CERT program managers by enabling individual team members to update their information, access incident report forms, and log their hours directly.

Using the single team account, administrators can communicate quickly with all CERT programs across eight counties, not just within their individual CERT program. This has facilitated better regional coordination of CERT programs to respond quickly to disaster events and host large-scale training exercises. The extensive software training provided by Mission Manager staff and the flexibility to customize the software to meet their unique needs has enabled the Lealman Fire District to streamline their management duties and work effectively as part of a large urban first response unit in the Tampa Bay area.

THE RESULTS
- *Single team account for large urban areas*
- *Simplified record keeping*
- *Centralized, easy-to-use communication system*
- *Customized training to fit Lealman's needs*

BACKGROUND

The Lealman Fire District provides fire and EMS services to Pinellas County, Florida, responding to over 11,000 incidents annually. They have responded to multiple statewide emergencies, including Hurricanes Charlie, Ivan, and Jeanne in 2004, and Hurricane Katrina in 2005, as part of the Florida Task Force of the National Emergency Management Assistance Compact in Mississippi.

As part of their services, the Lealman Fire District organizes a large group of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs). The CERT program, which is run through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), trains volunteers in a variety of disaster preparedness skills. These trained individuals can join local CERT programs that support emergency first responders during disasters. CERT individuals organized through the Lealman Fire District are trained to help with search and rescue, emergency medical services and shelter, fire safety, incident communication services, and manning volunteer reception centers. Lealman coordinates their CERT program with the larger Tampa Bay-Urban Area Security Initiative (TB-UASI) Citizen Corps Working Group, which represents CERT programs across eight counties in Florida.

THE CHALLENGE

The Lealman Fire District is in charge of their local CERT program, which means that they need to maintain updated training certifications and contact information for all CERT members. During incidents and training exercises, they must track each individual member's time on site; communicate with multiple CERT teams responding to an incident, and among members of a single team; maintain forms for incident communication services (CERT ICS); and respond to assignments on a joint calendar.

In addition to adequately tracking the contact information and records of their own CERT members, Lealman must also be able to coordinate this information with the larger TB-UASI, which organizes CERT programs across eight Florida counties. This is a massive organizational challenge that involves tracking up-to-date information and movements of thousands of CERT members during incidents. Prior to 2013, Lealman used multiple computer-based databases to maintain individual member records and certification forms, updated them manually, and required a separate web-hosting company to facilitate those communications—no simple task for the busy CERT program managers.

These organizational challenges were highlighted in November 2013 when the Lealman Fire District's CERT Program participated in a Lost Child training exercise in East Lake, Florida. It was a large training event with over 100 participants and the program managers quickly realized that it was impossible to monitor the appropriate use of CERT ICS forms in real-time by all individuals. "As a CERT instructor who taught the use of these forms, I suddenly realized that there had to be a better way," says Captain K. Larry Thompson, who manages the Emergency Management & Preparedness team at Lealman Fire District.

THE SOLUTION

Mission Manager offered a streamlined method for performing all the tasks Lealman's large team required. The Lealman Fire District implemented Mission Manager in late 2013, and has used it exclusively to address the management needs of their CERT program ever since. Using Mission Manager, individual CERT members can now directly update their contact information and certification records, log their own hours, respond to individual and group communications, and access important incident forms. This takes the pressure off of each CERT program manager to maintain this information and allows them more time to focus on training and education for the CERT members. As program manager Captain Thompson put it, "Mission Manager has saved me many hours of work by allowing members to update information and timekeeping."

After its successful implementation by the Lealman Fire District, Mission Manager was also adopted for use by the TB-UASI Citizen Corps Working Group in 2016 to track CERT programs across eight Florida counties. Using Mission Manager has allowed the Lealman Fire District to integrate its CERT Program with those in the larger TB-UASI territory into a single team account. Thanks to this single umbrella team account, CERT program managers throughout the TB-UASI area are able to invite other CERT teams to participate in training events and respond to incidents. This has massively streamlined coordination between the various groups during incidents and training exercises, while simplifying record upkeep for all the program managers. Captain Thompson recalls how, "when responding to a sheltering mission" in response to an impending hurricane, Mission Manager "allowed us to utilize several members from different teams all in one MM mission."

The ability of Mission Manager to effectively meet all of the Lealman Fire District and TB-UASI CERT program management needs was highlighted in June 2016 during the National Homeland Security Conference in Tampa, Florida. As the host agency for the four-day event, TB-UASI used Mission Manager to successfully manage and track more than 100 team assignments and over 750 volunteer hours.

Mission Manager was further tested on October 6, 2016 in response to Hurricane Matthew. The Pinellas County Emergency Management team needed additional staff at two shelters immediately, and the Lealman CERT program manager was able to use Mission Manager to alert all county CERT members. The shelters were fully staffed in under an hour thanks to Mission Manager's communication capabilities. Furthermore, program managers were able to track all CERT individuals throughout the 36-hour mission and keep track of 6-hour personnel rotations with Mission Manager. According to Captain Thompson, "Mission Manager has been a godsend!"

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> — *Captain K. Larry Thompson, Lealman Fire District Emergency Management & Preparedness*

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HOW MISSION MANAGER HELPED THE LEALMAN FIRE DISTRICT CERT PROGRAM

■ **SINGLE VS. MULTIPLE TEAM ACCOUNTS FOR COORDINATION ACROSS LARGE URBAN AREAS:** An important feature of the Mission Manager software is the flexibility for customers to choose a single or multiple team account. While both methods allow for organization and communication among large groups of people, the single team option can be extremely beneficial for simplifying the coordination of many teams in large urban areas. With multiple team accounts, users must set up an additional administrative account to allow communication between team leaders. However, with a single team account, users have the ability to directly communication with all members, no matter their individual team assignment. Single team accounts still allow managers to assign specific missions to sub-teams, so that smaller groups can maintain their individual tasks within the large team account. Together, the Lealman Fire District and the TB-UASI Citizen Corps Working Group have established a single team account that has streamlined their communication and management across multiple counties and CERT programs.

■ **EASY RECORD-KEEPING FOR LARGE GROUPS OF PERSONNEL:** Mission Manager makes it simple to keep personnel database records updated. Individual team members' personal contact information, certifications, and training can be managed directly through the software, and their hours on specific missions can be logged in real time. This means that program managers spend less of their valuable time updating computer databases with information that can quickly become outdated. Mission Manager also allows team members to easily access forms through the software, ensuring that the appropriate ICS reports can be filed quickly.

■ **PERSONNEL AND ASSET MANAGEMENT:** In addition to managing and coordinating personnel, Mission Manager allows administrators to monitor various resources. There is a separate tab in the software dedicated to inventory of equipment and assets available for use during incidents. Mission Manager even has a mapping feature that allows users to pinpoint equipment and assets on a map to indicate where they are located during a mission. With these records, administrators can quickly compile accurate information about mileage and timekeeping for official reports and grants.

■ **SUPERIOR MISSION MANAGER STAFF AND TRAINING RESOURCES:** Mission Manager is dedicated to helping its customers get the most out of their software and customize its usage to meet their particular needs. Mission Manager staff traveled to Florida to train the Lealman Fire District and TB-UASI personnel on using the software and managing their large, single team account, which encompassed CERT programs from 8 counties. Captain Thompson praised Mission Manager's "great instructors" at the training event, and complimented the overall responsiveness of the Mission Manager staff to Lealman Fire District's needs, including the personnel's patience dealing with complicated state purchasing requirements in Florida, "The MM staff has been responsive to requested changes and very easy to work with!"