

Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District



Battling black flies and wrestling with mosquitoes that carry West Nile Virus is all in a day's work for the 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.

Objective.

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 communications, 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. In addition, the cell phones had range and coverage issues.

The District initially contacted Verizon Wireless because of the wireless service provider's reputation for its outstanding network reliability. The Verizon Wireless representative also gave the District information about Verizon Wireless Field Force Manager, its wireless, Web-based mobile workforce management software.

Solution.

The Field Force Manager solution seemed like an ideal fit for the District. "We decided to implement Field Force Manager 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," says Kevin Vargas, a District supervisor.

GREATER LOS ANGELES COUNTY VECTOR CONTROL DISTRICT

Company Description:

With a coverage area of 1,300 square miles, the Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District monitors insect occurrence and activity and works on suppression in problem areas. Charged with reducing insect populations, preventing human infection, and preventing the loss of property values due to infestations, the District is made up of three supervisors who manage a staff of more than 70 mobile field workers.

Objectives:

- Give supervisors more visibility into field workers' activities throughout the day.
- Implement process for tracking and restocking employees' supplies in a timely manner.
- Improve safety and security concerns through confirmation of worker location and status.

Solution:

- Verizon Wireless supplied Field Force Manager to District supervisors and employees, allowing supervisors to easily and quickly access location and status on each field worker.
- Field personnel received supplies when they needed them.
- The solution enabled field personnel to work in teams and assist each other in a timely manner.

“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 Field Force Manager determines in a snap whether employees are where they should be, and if they’re doing assigned tasks.” Vargas notes 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 the Field Force Manager 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 says.

The District also uses the Field Force Manager 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.

Field Force Manager 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 says. “However, Field Force Manager 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 Field Force Manager’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 Field Force Manager to track the phone to a specific street address; it happened to be the student’s home.”

Through the implementation of Field Force Manager, Verizon Wireless was able to provide a complete solution that addressed all of the District’s most immediate needs in regard to its mobile field personnel. The solution helped supervisors better track employees throughout the day, improved timelines for keeping supplies stocked, and even aided greatly in the resolution of unexpected situations like theft.

Results:

- Supervisors are able to track and monitor employees at a moment’s notice and better coordinate worker teams.
- Supervisors can manage supply levels more easily and restock each field worker when needed.
- Workers become more aware of safe driving practices and company policies when they know their location and status is being recorded.
- Field Force Manager’s tracking features help resolve unexpected issues, such as traffic ticket disputes and equipment theft.

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