



Fire Department of New York Mobile Recovery Database

Challenge

As a result of the World Trade Center disaster, the FDNY was tasked with the responsibility of documenting the items recovered from the rubble of the disaster zone and recording information regarding location, time and type of item found – information critical to both the ongoing investigation and analysis of the event. The existing data capture process was laborious and inefficient. Firefighters recovering the items manually recorded identification descriptions and information regarding the date time, and estimate location of the item found. They would then attach a tracking number to the item and record that number on the paperwork they filled out. Later, back at the command center, the data was then manually input into a database to track all the items found. This information was also being used by other agencies involved in the investigation. Because the information was initially recorded on paper and then digitized and the location was based on a firefighter’s guess as to his location on the 16 acre site, this process resulted in mismatched tracking numbers as well as inaccurate location data.



Solution

Links Point was asked by the FDNY and other Federal and State agencies involved to develop a solution that would automate the process, making it more efficient and the location data more accurate.



Links Point developed an application to run on the Symbol PP T 2800, a ruggedized handheld, which allows the firefighters to select a description of the item found and automatically capture the time, date and location of the item. In addition, the firefighters were able to tag the item with a barcode and scan that barcode with the device in order to match the item with the electronic record. By using a GPS attachment manufactured by Links Point, location-specific information identifying exactly where the item was found is automatically added to the record. The entire 16 acre disaster site has been mapped into a grid format, which all the agencies use for mapping and reporting. The application automatically read the GPS coordinates and translates the latitude/ longitude information received from the GPS signal into the geo-referenced grid map coordinates, allowing the firefighters to instantly determine in which grid cell the item was recovered.

The data captured is uploaded to the database directly from the handheld, eliminating the need for manual input.

Benefits

This application resulted in an increase in data capture rates and a decrease in data errors. By using GPS technology, the FDNY is able to have accurate location information for all items recovered. In addition, human error in the tagging of the items as well as the manual input of the data into the database was eliminated.

