Application Story
State of Hawaii, Civil Defense

State of Hawaii Civil Defense Chooses e/pop Web Conferencing for Statewide Emergency Preparedness Communications

Under President Bush's directive, the Secretary of Homeland Security developed the National Incident Management System (NIMS). NIMS' integrates effective practices in emergency preparedness and response into a comprehensive national framework for incident management. In a nutshell, NIMS will enable responders at all levels to work together more effectively to manage domestic incidents no matter the cause, size or complexity.

NIMS will help improve the ability to coordinate communications in the case of All-Hazards' emergencies and disasters. It will make communications processes, procedures and systems and support information management systems interoperable and will also designate that voice, data, information, data display systems and specialized technology also function together through standardization of systems, procedures and equipment.

The creation of NIMS propelled the need for city, county, state and federal government entities to create Virtual Joint Information Centers (VJIC) in order for the coordination of disaster response and recovery information.

One particular state, which is posed with some unique challenges when faced with disasters and emergencies, is the State of Hawaii. Hawaii is an ideal vacation place with unparalleled weather and lush tropical scenery. However, when it comes to protecting its more than 1.2 million citizens, not to mention the thousands of tourists that visit the islands each day, Hawaii was forced to address its geographic issues in order to create a comprehensive public safety plan for the state's seven islands. Most of the state's population resides on Oahu, with Honolulu being the island state's largest city and its capital.

Problem:
- State of Hawaii, Civil Defense, sought a method by which it could quickly communicate inter- and intra-island in the event of a disaster or emergency.

Solution:
- e/pop Web Conferencing, a full-featured, affordable, multiparty web and video conferencing software

Business & IT Benefits:
- e/pop enables Public Information Officers from 7 islands and various agencies to meet and edit documents in real-time.
- It also enables the 7 Hawaiian Islands to maintain a coordinated and comprehensive public safety plan.

When the State of Hawaii Civil Defense Department set out to create its own VJIC it decided that in order to efficiently coordinate communications between agencies on all seven islands it needed to go one step beyond and find a suitable web and video collaboration solution to support the mission of the VJIC.

In order to gather Public Information Officers and other public officials from Hawaii's county, city and state governments quickly during a crisis, the State of Hawaii Civil Defense department rose to the challenge of finding a web-based conferencing system that would support their needs for communicating and interaction between islands, reducing time out of the office for travel and associated costs.

Billy Gomban, an IT consultant retained by the State of Hawaii to build the IT resources for the VJIC, found WiredRed's e/pop Web Conferencing through a standard Internet search and, because of its comprehensive feature set, including multi-party video, VoIP, remote control, plus complete desktop, application/document and dynamic presentation sharing, and security options, he decided that it was a good fit for the VJIC being developed by the Civil Defense Department of Hawaii.

"I found many web conferencing solution providers on the Internet, but not many met all the criteria we had for the VJIC," explained Gomban. "One of our highest priorities was to find a secure conferencing product, and e/pop Web Conferencing provides the highest level of security including third-party certificates, which was certainly a major selling point."

e/pop Web Conferencing was installed and quickly integrated into the State of Hawaii Civil Defense VJIC, which consists of four information sharing components:

• Alerting: this system provides and email and short messaging alert notification limited to registered users.
• Telephone Conferencing: Registered users are provided with a PIN to access conference calls that are initiated to support the VJIC.
• Web Site: Designated users are provided with access to a restricted web site used to share an incident log, incident related documents such as news releases, talking points, briefings and other related information.
• Video Conferencing: The web-based conferencing and collaboration system provides interactive information sharing and coordination tools. The type of incident and agencies involved will dictate priority access to these tools and the host server. The system is accessible 24/7.

Prior to installing e/pop Web Conferencing, teleconferencing was the traditional method whereby Public Information Officers, officials and other agencies stayed in touch. But getting everyone on the phone at the same time proved difficult and meetings weren't as interactive and effective as they could be.

Ray Lovell, the Public Information Officer for the State of Hawaii Civil Defense Department, believes that using an interactive system like e/pop Web Conferencing lets him and his fellow PIOs accomplish more in less time.

"e/pop Web Conferencing allows us to see each other and talk to each other while we pass around and edit documents in real time," said Lovell. "In the event of a disaster, when everything must be done in real-time, the ability to gather information quickly, create talking points for press conferences and share this information is invaluable. Not only does it save us time but it helps us to get accurate information out to the public that much faster."

All four counties in Hawaii, including Oahu, Maui, Kauai and Hawaii work with State Civil Defense to coordinate emergency relief and disaster recovery efforts and work at the local level with First Responders and other agencies.

"e/pop Web Conferencing makes state and county boundaries disappear," explained Lovell. "We can talk, see each other via web cameras and text chat if necessary so it provides multiple levels of communications. And it is so simple to use. If you can use Word or Excel than using e/pop Web Conferencing is just as easy."

Lovell noted that if he is traveling outside of the state all he really needs is a laptop, web cam and a high-speed Internet connection to access and join VJIC web conferences.

The State of Hawaii Civil Defense found that web conferencing met their needs for collaborating, coordinating and communicating in real-time about emergencies and crises, and in the process found that is a time-saver and helped to reduce costs attributed to business travel. From an end-user perspective, e/pop Web Conferencing also fulfilled the requirement that it be easy to use, especially important in a time of crisis.

"Although the VJIC is our primary mission for the use of e/pop Web Conferencing, I plan to train other departments on how to use it to further reduce travel costs and also reduce time out of the office for in-person meetings," added Gomban. "The staff will be able to use e/pop for online meetings, presentations and trainings, which will help us to decrease unnecessary travel."

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