

CASE STUDY



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United States Forest Service Makes Use of Avenza PDF Maps App to Reduce Critical Time Delays and Increase Response Time During Natural Disasters

Avenza PDF Maps app allows most up-to-date info for fighting fire, hurricanes, and tornadoes all while reducing environmental waste

For over a century now, the US Forest Service has been fighting wildfires and other natural disasters throughout the US and American territories. During these times of action, the US Forest Service's men and women congregate from all across the nation to serve together in the field battling fires, hurricanes, and tornadoes for up to several weeks at a time. In order to prepare for these unfortunate events, fire fighters were usually given map packets with up to 20 pages of 11x17 paper maps, bundled together. These map packets were printed and assembled the night prior and were distributed amongst several hundred fire fighters the next morning.



Responding with Southern California Interagency Incident Management Team One with 53 personal, Situational Unit leader and Fire Engine Captain, Chris Brenzel, explained the need for an efficient, digital mapping solution in hopes of improving overall situational awareness as well as reducing their environmental footprint. "Often times the natural disasters we come across span over thousands of acres – and they move quickly," Brenzel said. "When these fires move rapidly and cover so much ground, our fire fighters must

stay fully aware of the current status – this was getting difficult to achieve with paper maps due to the lack of ability to update them. And the amount of paper we were using was just getting out of control.”

When Brenzel discovered that Avenza’s PDF Maps app offered crystal-clear, interactive digital maps, he was immediately interested and eager to test it out in a real-world setting. “When I found Avenza’s PDF Maps app in the iTunes App Store, I was so excited,” Brenzel stated. “It’s easy, powerful, and free! With this app, I can have several maps on my phone and can access them anywhere I am – even if I am offline.”



Avenza Systems, Inc., a leading developer of cartographic software, had recently created a mobile app called Avenza PDF Maps for the iOS (iPhones and iPads) platform so that map publishers and individual cartographers could upload, distribute and sell or provide for free digital versions of their paper maps. Now in a digital format, maps could easily be downloaded onto an iPad or iPhone. Paired together with mobile devices that use GPS, the PDF Maps app provided the best of all worlds – the ability to read details clearly like a paper map, find your location with GPS and even add your own placemarks and data points.

“Because of the nature of our job, the technology behind this app is crucial to what we do since the situation can change quickly and suddenly,” Brenzel expressed. “With the map packets we utilized before discovering Avenza’s PDF Maps app, we were never able to update them after 11:00 PM the night prior – so much can change overnight when it comes to a wildfire or a hurricane. Now that we have the PDF Maps app, we can update our maps throughout the day to keep everyone fully informed of the situation.”



With the use of Avenza’s PDF Maps app, Brenzel was able to transfer large

traditional paper maps to digitized, interactive PDFs for his team to utilize. This simple transfer of data from traditional maps to digitized PDFs gained approval from Brenzel's team with the US Forest Service in just a couple of months. "When you're out there fighting a huge wildfire, a packet of paper maps can easily tear or rip and quickly becomes a burden," said Brenzel. "The beauty of accessing maps through the PDF Maps app is that my team and I can view the maps on our iPhones or iPads anytime and see the most current status. I just have my team download the newest update and they can view the most current map. This was the biggest issue we had with our map packets – we were never able to update them as the status of the fire was constantly changing."

Since US Forest Service fire fighters must travel regularly throughout the United States as well as its territories to battle natural disasters, the conditions frequently vary. "Disasters happen everywhere – even where there may not be an internet connection," Brenzel explained. "But with the Avenza PDF Maps app, I don't have to worry about losing reception. I can be in any remote area – even in the air – and still view all the maps on my iPhone without fail."



With the Avenza PDF Maps app, Brenzel and his team are able to provide situational awareness to all those involved in fighting natural disasters on US soil. By using the PDF Maps app versus the previous paper map packets, Brenzel and his team are able to eliminate time delays as well as reduce the amount of paper waste. The PDF Maps app allows downloading/updating maps through the Avenza Map Store 24-hours a day as well as downloading custom maps with QR codes - another benefit to using digital maps. Through this technology, the US Forest Service men and women can easily prepare well in advance, quickly and conveniently before facing any natural disaster. Additionally, the United States Forest Service is using the application to build maps of fuel reduction projects and community defense zones to help define the boundaries and aid in the work.



The US Forest Service implemented the use of Avenza's PDF Maps app mid-summer of 2012, and although still early in their adoption, the team has already seen the essential need and functionality of the Avenza PDF Maps app. Brenzel predicts that by next year, all incident management teams in the US west and southwest will have adopted the Avenza PDF Maps

app. "We are really enjoying the benefits of this app as well as working with Avenza. Not only do they have a fantastic product but their customer service was really impressive. Avenza was quickly able to provide answers and recommend solutions in regards to distributing information to a wider group of fire fighters."

More about Avenza's PDF Maps app

Avenza's PDF Maps app is an all-inclusive solution for the transfer of conventional paper maps to digitized, interactive PDFs readily available for handheld mobile devices on the iOS platform. It allows for consumers and businesses to utilize and purchase maps directly to and from their devices; any geo-referenced map may be uploaded and made available for purchase in a compressed, digital version which is both visually brilliant as well as convenient.

Avenza PDF Maps app features the ability to:

- Search for places and points of interest on any map using the Google database
- Export, import and share waypoints and associated attribute data, including photos
- Measure distances and areas and estimate walking times
- Download and carry multiple maps on one device similar to music and books
- Import KML waypoints (including images and custom pins) exported from PDF Maps or other software such as Google Earth or Avenza MAPublisher

More about Avenza Systems Inc.

Avenza Systems Inc. is an award-winning, privately held corporation that provides cartographers and GIS professionals with powerful software tools for making better maps. In addition to software offerings for Mac and Windows users, Avenza offers value-added data sets, product training, and consulting services. For more information visit www.avenza.com or call (416) 487-5116.

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