

Temecula Utilizes Wireless Technology to Empower its Mobile Inspection Teams

Accela Wireless enables inspectors to perform daily tasks from the field

Located in southwest Riverside County, in a lush valley just 15 miles from the Pacific Ocean, Temecula is one of Southern California's most beautiful new communities. The City is relatively new (incorporated in 1989) but has been growing rapidly since its inception; the population has increased over 60% in the last thirteen years. From the beginning, the City has been a leader in implementing e-government solutions to manage their rapid growth. Soon after Temecula was incorporated, they turned to Accela for a solution to manage their permitting activities. The City has been a client for more than ten years, using Accela solutions to automate and track its land management activities.

THE CHALLENGE

While the Accela software solution automated and managed all of the permitting tasks for Temecula, there was still room for improvement. Specifically, the City turned its focus to the inspection process. City council members were receiving calls from citizens who were frustrated with how long inspections were taking. City staff were challenged with responding to these calls in a timely fashion because there was often a lag time between inspections being scheduled and the results being entered into the database. The City needed a way to streamline the process and make results available sooner.

As City staff began looking at possible solutions, they became more interested in implementing wireless technology. With the proliferation of new mobile devices like Pocket PCs and Tablet PCs, workforces were becoming increasingly productive in the field and City staff saw a way to apply this success. "We felt strongly that utilizing wireless technology would improve efficiency for our inspectors," commented Steve Brown, Code Enforcement Manager. "If inspectors were equipped with proper technology in the field, they could minimize travel time to and from the home office and process more inspections per day."

While the City staff were excited about implementing this new solution, inspectors were more reluctant. They were concerned that the new system would create additional work. "Although there was some hesitation on the part of the inspectors, we were confident that a wireless solution would be the right step in improving our ability to deliver efficient government services to citizens," commented Tim Thorson, the Director of Information Services. "Additionally, because the City was continuing to grow and had sufficient resources, we felt that this was an opportune time to implement new e-government initiatives."

Minimize Travel Time. The City's fire inspectors are responsible for completing between three and seven inspections per day, each lasting one hour on average. With multiple inspections scattered throughout the City, minimizing travel time was a key issue. Inspectors would spend most of the day traveling to various inspection sites, manually completing the inspections forms. These forms were then returned to the home office and administrative staff would input the results into the permit system. This process often resulted in a delay between

Customer



Temecula, California

Population

75,014

Location

Located in southwest Riverside County

Quote

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when an inspection was performed and when it was updated in the system. The City wanted a wireless solution that would allow inspectors to signoff and approve inspections from the field. This capability would speed up the overall process and eliminate the data entry step, meaning greater accuracy and fewer errors in processing.

Create Inspections in the Field. Inspectors in the Code Enforcement Department wanted the same mobile capabilities as the Fire Department but faced some unique challenges. While in the field responding to reported code violations, these inspectors often came across additional violations that had yet to be reported—abandoned vehicles, illegal signage, or lack of landscape maintenance for example. These violations needed to be entered as new cases but inspectors needed a way to view current parcel data or code violation history when creating the new cases. A wireless solution would allow immediate, remote access to the City database, providing code enforcement inspectors a complete view of the case and allowing them to be more proactive in responding to the community's complaints.

THE SOLUTION

Temecula again turned to Accela. Accela Wireless™ is an application that works with a city's existing land management database to provide wireless access capabilities. Inspectors utilize the program to transfer many of their daily tasks from the office to the field. The project began with the Fire Department. Inspectors were equipped with Tablet PCs running Accela Wireless. Using the program, inspectors view daily inspection schedules, access property data, and signoff on completed inspections. Updates are made to the database in real-time so there is no need to return to the office at the end of the day.

“Our ability to leverage mobile technology allows us to do more with our existing resources,” stated Jim McBride, Fire Marshal for Temecula. “Our full-time inspectors can do more in the same amount of time and the department is relying less on bringing in alternate inspectors. The end result is better, faster service for our citizens.”

On-line/Off-line Mode. If inspectors are working in areas with limited wireless communication or none at all, any updates are stored in the mobile device and uploaded to the database when a connection is reestablished or when the inspector returns to the office.

New Inspection Creation. Code Enforcement inspectors in the field can create new cases as they encounter violations. The agency database is accessed remotely to view current and historical data about the location, allowing inspectors to create new cases. The information is automatically updated to the main database so if the home office receives a call about the violation, they can provide the complainant with the most current information.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Accela Wireless has been a success for Temecula. Inspectors are happy because it is allowing them to work more efficiently. City staff and Temecula citizens are also seeing results, especially when processing calls between citizens and city council members, where real-time access to data provides greater situational awareness and allows staff to be more proactive in responding to inquiries. The success of the project has helped convince other departments of the value of wireless. In developing the budget for next year, both Building and Public Works will be reviewing how their departments will implement Accela Wireless.



ABOUT ACCELA

Accela is a leading developer of software and Internet applications for state and local government. With Accela, jurisdictions of all sizes will reduce workload, increase efficiency and automate processes while providing citizens and businesses with more convenient access to government services.

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