

# Washington TECHNOLOGY

## E Team keeps cool in crisis

12/15/03

By WILLIAM WELSH

### Software blazes trail in Calif. wildfire fight

San Diego County Emergency Services Director Debby Steffen faced an ordinary fire season this year, until wildfires in the county turned it into the worst in California history.

The fires scorched nearly 400,000 acres, destroyed more than 5,000 homes and other structures and killed 16 people. They caused about \$1 billion worth of property damage, not to mention millions of dollars in firefighting costs.

Steffen had to know the location of each of the county's emergency response personnel and the situation each faced in order to protect the lives and property of residents. But the county lacked a modern automated system that would allow her to do this.

As the fires began to reach blowout stage, Steffen placed an urgent call to Mark Fell, director of sales for E Team, requesting that he quickly train personnel at the county's emergency operations center to use the company's crisis information management software, or CIMS. The software helps personnel from different agencies communicate with each other and manage their resources.

"We were in the process of procuring from E Team when the disaster occurred," Steffen said. "Mark called and offered to set us up. He said we could use the software in advance of the purchase."

Fell made good on his offer. "We hit the door at 7 a.m. [Tuesday, Oct. 28] and began training within the hour," Fell said. Over the course of the next 20 hours, Fell trained about 60 workers from two shifts.

The software was effective, Steffen said.

"I didn't realize what a great tool it would be for situation status," she said. "All people had to do was look at status reports and messaging, and gather the information."

E-Team of Canoga Park, Calif., is just one of several companies selling CIMS. Others include Blue 292 Inc., Durham, N.C.; Ramsafe Inc., Marietta, Ga.; Emergency Services Integrators Inc., Augusta, Ga.; and Alert Technologies Inc., Pleasanton, Calif.

The potential market for emergency operations across both the public and private sectors is worth several billion dollars, according to analysts and industry officials. Many local governments are still coordinating emergency response with grease boards and pencils in a makeshift room, rather than using an automated system in a modern emergency operations center, said Kevin Coyne, Blue 292's executive vice president.

The software enables agencies that don't normally work together to coordinate assets and resources during a large-scale emergency, such as the San Diego wildfires, said Victor Subia, E Team's director of subject matter expertise. E Team's product, which has the same name as the company, gave personnel who were coordinating the response the ability to see the big picture, Subia said.

While most emergency management agencies at the state and local levels have geographic information systems, many do not have a system that integrates CIMS with GIS, said James Lee Witt, president of the Washington-

based public safety consulting firm James Lee Witt Associates. Witt also is a former director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

E Team's CIMS brought together a wide range of agencies, including the county's environmental health, public health, animal control, sheriffs department, public utilities, Red Cross, California Highway Patrol and state office of emergency services, Steffen said.

In addition to helping emergency personnel manage their assets in real time, the software also serves a number of other important purposes, she said. The software tracks requests for disaster recovery assistance by people and businesses. It also captures information that is passed along to the state to obtain more resources and get reimbursement for resources expended. The software serves as a repository for information that is used in after-action reports, she said.

E Team is tracking 3,704 requests for assistance from FEMA made by individuals and families at four assistance centers located throughout the county, Fell said.

One of the deciding factors in selecting E Team's solution over other products was that county emergency services personnel, who are preoccupied with homeland security matters, don't have time to write software, Steffen said.

"One of the other software products that we looked at, and that a couple of other emergency operations centers use, is maybe less expensive and a lot more flexible, but it requires time to program and to tailor to your operations," she said. "With the [homeland security grants] and everything else we are doing, we are way too overwhelmed to think about programming software."

So far, San Diego County has purchased 40 licenses for E Team's solution, Steffen said. She expects the county ultimately will purchase about 200 licenses, and the city of San Diego will purchase about 125 licenses for its use.

Although E-Team and San Diego officials declined to disclose the precise value of the deal, Fell said the type of software license the county purchased is worth about \$5,000 per seat.

E Team has alliances with Electronic Data Systems Corp., Plano, Texas; IBM Corp., Armonk, N.Y.; Science Applications International Corp., San Diego; and Unisys Corp., Blue Bell, Pa.

SAIC deployed E Team's CIMS product at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City and is planning to deploy it again next year for the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece, Subia said.

While some CIMS products on the market are designed to be installed as an upgrade to existing systems, they often are marketed as part of a comprehensive incident management system or new emergency command center, analysts and company officials said.

Unless government can facilitate the integration, software as a standalone product offering is a tough sell, Ray Bjorklund, senior vice president for market and chief knowledge officer for market research firm Federal Sources Inc., McLean, Va.

"The vendor and integrator must spend some time with the government agency to understand how they work and what their specific needs are before implementing the product," he said. "Even after implementation and deployment of the software, someone needs to help the government refine its policies and processes, so that it may fully use the product in a way that is compatible with its unique structure and culture."

Staff writer William Welsh can be reached at [wwelsh@postnewsweektech.com](mailto:wwelsh@postnewsweektech.com).

---

## Who you gonna call? Crisis incident management software providers

**Product:** Blue292

**Company:** Blue292 Inc.

**Headquarters:** Durham, N.C.

**Web site:** [www.blue292.com](http://www.blue292.com)

**Description:** Blue292 is a Web-based application designed to deliver a wide range of features for planning and management of emergency or incident information.

**Product:** Crisis

**Company:** Ship Analytics International Inc.

**Headquarters:** North Stonington, Conn.

**Web site:** [www.shipanalytics.com](http://www.shipanalytics.com)

**Description:** Crisis is a Web-enabled, all-hazard decision support and incident response management system.

**Product:** EOC System

**Company:** Clark Reynolds Co.

**Headquarters:** Cochiti Lake, N.M.

**Web site:** [www.emergency-planning.com](http://www.emergency-planning.com)

**Description:** EOC is a series of Microsoft Word and Excel files provided in template form that are intended to be printed and used in a prescribed manual process delivered from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's emergency support functions and the incident command system.

**Product:** E Team

**Company:** E Team Inc.

**Headquarters:** Canoga Park, Calif.

**Web site:** [www.eteam.com](http://www.eteam.com)

**Description:** E Team is a multi-user, network-based system that employs industry standard Web browsers as client software. The product offers a range of features to plan and manage incident and event information. The software is integrated with an ESRI mapping application to provide comprehensive functional mapping capabilities.

**Product:** Incident Master

**Company:** Essential Information Systems Inc.

**Headquarters:** Rockville, Md.

**Web site:** [www.essential-technologies.com](http://www.essential-technologies.com)

**Description:** Incident Master is a Web-based application designed to deliver features to help plan and manage incident and event information.

**Product:** OpsCenter

**Company:** Alert Technologies Corp.

**Headquarters:** Pleasanton, Calif.

**Web site:** [www.alerttech.com](http://www.alerttech.com)

**Description:** OpsCenter is an Internet-based application that delivers a range of capabilities to manage critical situations. It is billed as software to help manage not only crisis-related incidents, but also special events involving any number of people, equipment and other resources.

**Product:** Ramsafe

**Company:** Ramsafe

**Headquarters:** Marietta, Ga.

**Web site:** [www.ramsafe.com](http://www.ramsafe.com)

**Description:** Ramsafe is a new-generation emergency management product developed under a public-private partnership with substantial input from emergency managers and responders. The software is organized as five core modules that take decision-making through all critical phases of emergency management and response: planning, exercises, training, operations and recovery.

**Product:** Response

**Company:** E.A. Renfro & Co.

**Headquarters:** Birmingham, Ala.

**Web site:** [www.earenfro.com](http://www.earenfro.com)

**Description:** Response is an application designed to deliver a range of features for planning and management of incident and event information. Its principal focus is the resource tracking and accountability perspective implemented with the incident command system process.

**Product:** SoftRisk

**Company:** SoftRisk Technologies Inc.

**Headquarters:** St. Simons Island, Ga.

**Web site:** [www.softrisk.com](http://www.softrisk.com)

**Description:** The SoftRisk emergency management software from SoftRisk Technologies is an application designed to deliver features to plan and manage incident and event information.

**Product:** WebEOC Standard, Web EOC Professional

**Company:** Emergency Services Integrators Inc.

**Headquarters:** Augusta, Ga.

**Web site:** [www.esi911.com](http://www.esi911.com)

**Description:** WebEOC is an application designed to deliver features for the planning and management of real-time incident and event information. It is designed with a control panel that can launch status boards, maps and links to other applications and sites.

Source: "Crisis Information Management Software Feature Comparison Report," National Institute of Justice, October 2002