



LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT

Reducing the Risk of Brush Fires in Los Angeles Using Pumatech's Satellite Forms® Software



"Satellite Forms software solution has enabled the Los Angeles Fire Department to more effectively survey properties for brush clearance violations by decreasing the time spent gathering data and reducing the number of human errors."

– Dale Thomson, director of
systems, Los Angeles Fire
Department

The Company: Los Angeles Fire Department

The Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) has been protecting lives, the environment and property for many years. The Department has many areas of expertise including emergency medical, forestry, health hazards, fire prevention, and lifeguarding. As part of their fire prevention initiative, local property inspections are done annually to create a safer environment for Los Angeles residents. In 1999, the Los Angeles Fire Department's Brush Inspector Task Force began using a new technology to assist with their inspections in an effort to reduce costs and errors.

The Challenge: Cutting Costs and Eliminating Errors

The fire inspectors routinely check local properties in search of fire hazards and critical fire code violations such as roof debris, dead trees or combustible fences. Until spring 1999, the Los Angeles Fire Department had been utilizing a pen-and-paper-based system to maintain brush fire inspection records and violation logging. The inspectors took handwritten notes on violations, then sent them to the office to be keyed into the computer. As a result of this process, many documents were lost and were taking too long to be entered into the computer system. The input delays meant increased fire danger if a violation wasn't cleared up promptly. Errors were also occurring when inspectors wrote down, or operators keyed in, the wrong 10-digit property code used to locate the neighborhood.

The Solution: Pumatech's Satellite Forms Software

Armed with a palm-sized high-tech device and a customized software solution, the LAFD is making a bold move to cut costs and eliminate the errors that plagued its previous pen-and-paper-based system of inspecting local fire hazards.

Last spring, the 50 members of the LAFD's Brush Inspector Task Force hit the streets equipped with new SPT 1500 handheld devices from Symbol Technologies, and a tailor-made software application created with Satellite Forms software from Pumatech. A handheld device based on Palm Inc's Palm III™ handheld device, the SPT 1500 features a built-in bar code scanner, while the custom Satellite Forms software solution enables inspectors to record data quickly and download the results directly to the LAFD's computer system.

Using the customized application created with Satellite Forms, inspectors can log information simply by navigating drop-down menus and tapping checkboxes on the SPT 1500's screen. Designed to mirror the paper-based form that inspectors were accustomed to using in the past, the application provides the option of drawing a map of a property to indicate where a specific violation exists. After the inspections, when the SPT 1500 devices are returned to any of five inspection stations, the Satellite Forms-generated software application synchronizes the data with the LAFD's computer database system.

The LAFD used this new, high-tech data collection and processing system to survey approximately 180,000 private and public properties in spring 1999.



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