

CASE STUDY: SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA REGIONAL TASKFORCE

VISUAL ASSET MANAGER AT WORK FOR
EMERGENCY RESPONSE
ORGANIZATIONS

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The Client

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Taskforce, a division of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), is responsible for purchasing and delivering vital equipment to first-responders. These emergency management personnel may be called into action to face incidents ranging from environmental catastrophes to terrorist attacks involving weapons of mass destruction.

The mission of PEMA is to coordinate state agency response, including the Office of the State Fire Commissioner and Office of Homeland Security. PEMA supports county and local governments in the areas of civil defense, disaster mitigation and preparedness, planning and response to man-made or natural disasters.

Throughout the State, PEMA coordinates emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation efforts for natural and manmade disasters such as tornadoes, storms, earthquakes, hazardous materials incidents, including acts of terrorism involving weapons of mass destruction. By working seamlessly with state agencies, local public safety departments and volunteer organizations, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency can effectively coordinate the state's 67 counties in times of crisis.

The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency approaches their mission with a focus on customer-service and a belief that people are the most valuable asset. Specifically the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency employs and deploys the best available technology to:

- Accommodate a better understanding of the Commonwealth Strategy for Homeland Security
- Provide disaster relief for the public sector through infrastructure repair, and for the individual sphere through human services
- Address the critical need of providing advanced, up-to-date training for Pennsylvania's public safety professionals, through the Training and Exercise Management Division

PEMA oversees a number of programs and services to help prevent, respond to, or recover from disasters. They include federal and state support, as well as citizen-based volunteer opportunities to assist in times of disaster or emergency. The list of programs and services include:

- Hazard Mitigation
- 9-1-1 Program
- Community and State Planning
- Nuclear Power Plant Safety
- Hazardous Materials Preparedness
- "VOAD" - Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters
- Urban Search and Rescue Program
- Grant Management Programs
- Intrastate Mutual Aid

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- Warning and Communication Systems

Problem

PEMA is a dynamic organization; one who's responsibility is vital to the safety and well-being of the citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. To prepare their emergency personnel for any disaster scenario requires, first and foremost, an accurate account of the organization's equipment.

"We purchase everything from men's underwear to armored personal carriers and everything in between," said Bill York, equipment manager for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Taskforce. "We are a part of the Department of Homeland Security so our assets have to be strictly accounted for."

The Taskforce faced the challenge of conducting an annual audit, ensuring that all purchased equipment was in good working condition. Moreover PEMA demanded that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Taskforce create a standardized means of classifying equipment. Specifically, this standardization was to be based off of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) classification for authorized equipment usage. Finally, this soon-to-be created protocol would have to be repeatable; its design was intended to be implemented for other regional taskforces and agencies.

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Taskforce had no such protocol in place. Originally the Taskforce was taking inventory and conducting audits using pen and paper. This wholly inefficient process resulted in overspending on unnecessary asset purchases, accountability mistakes caused by human error and an inability to assign assets when needed.

Their organization then employed an out-dated asset-management program which fell short of demands. The lack of sophistication, and rigid, un-customizable features restricted the Taskforce's functionality.

"Our original software could only indicate where an asset was located," explained Bill York. "We demanded more from our software platform."

Solution

After using the demonstration version of the Visual Asset Manager software, Bill York was convinced Visual Asset Manager was what his organization needed. Looking for a range of unique features, Bill York approached Eric Beser, managing partner at E-ISG, with a challenge.

"I needed software that could streamline our asset management process," said Bill York. "I needed a powerful search tool which would allow me to track a range of asset information like maintenance, cost and vendor details."

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Eric Beser and the customer service team at E-ISG conferred with Bill York, designing a fully customized approach to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Taskforce's asset management demands. Two



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features in particular, the property-pass and report generator helped the Taskforce achieve its asset management goals.

The Property Pass Manager creates a physical and virtual paper trail used to keep employees accountable for the assets assigned to them. Moreover, the “signature capture” feature allows managers to digitally sign the property pass. The “signature capture” seals the property pass from further edits effectively creating a **legal chain of custody** used to transfer assets from various locations.

Of all the many dynamic features offered by the VAM software, E-ISG recognized that the automatic report generator was one of vital importance. For this reason, E-ISG implemented the automatic report generator into the Taskforce’s asset management plan.

The automatic report generator allows users to create localized reports, and exports each list into excel worksheets. Visual Asset Manager supports reporting through MS SQL Server Reporting services, while also providing the ability to craft ad-hoc reports.

Using the Taskforce’s existing data, Eric Beser and the staff at E-ISG created a standard for importing equipment using a customized form, classified by PEMA as the “DGMO8 form.” The DGMO8’s uniformed features allowed end-users to import data easily and efficiently. Additionally, by tracking information such as asset usage and cost, the DGMO8 was designed to act as a summary report for grant purposes.

Excel Report

SUBGRANTEE NAME: _____ DATE: 1/31/2011

GRANT YEAR: _____

GRANT NUMBER: _____

GRANT PROGRAM: _____

PO Number	PO Line #	PO Line Status	Manufacturer	Vendor	Description of Equipment	Serial Number	Property ID Number	Quantity	Unit Cost	Federal Cost	Match Cost	Total Cost	Date Received	Dis
430208913	1	C	Hess	Safety League Inc	Training Suit for SWAT Check Blue	804580		1	\$0.00	0		\$0.00	10/26/2010	Repl
430208913	1	C	Hess	Safety League Inc	Training Suit for SWAT Check Blue	804581		1	\$0.00	0		\$0.00	10/26/2010	Repl
430208913	1	C	Hess	Safety League Inc	Training Suit for SWAT Check Blue	804582		1	\$0.00	0		\$0.00	10/26/2010	Repl
430208913	1	C	Hess	Safety League Inc	Boots for SWAT Check	804583		1	\$0.00	0		\$0.00	10/26/2010	Repl
430208913	1	C	Hess	Safety League Inc	Boots for SWAT Check	804584		1	\$0.00	0		\$0.00	10/26/2010	Repl
430208913	1	C	Hess	Safety League Inc	Boots for SWAT Check	804585		1	\$0.00	0		\$0.00	10/26/2010	Repl
430208913	1	C	Hess	Safety League Inc	Multi Threat Suit for SWAT Check	4793		1	\$0.00	0		\$0.00	10/26/2010	Repl
430208913	1	C	Hess	Safety League Inc	Multi Threat Suit for SWAT Check	4790		1	\$0.00	0		\$0.00	10/26/2010	Repl

Figure 1 - DGMO8 Report Form

Finally, in addition to the property pass and report generator features, E-ISG included a “category-tree,” a hierarchical list of the Taskforce’s assets. This category list was intended to visually organize the Taskforce’s equipment so that vital information could be viewed instantly.



This category is based on FEMA’s authorized equipment list and is used to provide a uniform “top-down” approach to equipment classification.

Results

E-ISG utilized Visual Asset Managers customization features to craft a fully customizable and comprehensively standardized asset management system for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Taskforce. Most importantly, the effectiveness of the system’s standardization across both the Taskforce and PEMA’s subdivisions allowed the process to be replicated. This proven method demonstrated the effectiveness of the Visual Asset Manager software, and E-ISG has since replicated this process for the Northeastern Pennsylvania Regional Taskforce, as well as a myriad of other organizations.



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The legal chain of custody was most effective for the taskforce as they were commonly audited by the Department of Homeland Security.

“We were able to provide the Department of Homeland Security with the property pass, complete with an authorized signature,” explained Bill York. “At that point the Department of Homeland Security could go right to the end user and observe how a particular piece of equipment was being utilized.”

Asset Accountability

The ability to view asset usage at the end-user level created a climate of accountability that was vitally lacking in the Taskforce’s organizational culture. Visual Asset Manager encouraged a visual representation of the Taskforce’s asset pool, allowing Bill York and his team to make informed decisions regarding the usage and deployment of their equipment.

The task force capitalized on the increased asset accountability and produced a fully comprehensive and highly efficient fleet tracking system. Using the real time data generated by Visual Asset Manager, the Taskforce was able to interpret maintenance records and understand the physical limitations of the vehicles. This translated into the ability to deploy their vehicles and equipment quickly and confidently. Moreover, with greater insight into their fleet’s history, the Taskforce was able to track each vehicle’s total mileage and gas consumption. This type of data drove huge cost savings.

In addition to meeting the standards set forth both by FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security, the Taskforce streamlined their process for requesting grants. With the assistance of Visual Asset Manager’s automatic report generator feature, the Taskforce is now able to complete vital grant requisition and reports – a process that used to require six to ten weeks of work - in less than five minutes. What’s more, the information generated by these audits directly correlated to the amount of grant-funding allocated to the Taskforce.

Accordingly, the Taskforce used the customized report feature to generate and interpret data concerned with tracking their emergency response vehicles, ensuring their personnel were equipped with the latest protective equipment and perhaps most importantly, adhering to Urban Area Support Initiative (UASI) Grant stipulations.

The UASI Grant provides funding to nonprofit organizations that are at high risk of terrorist attack. The allocated funds are intended for target-hardening activities and requisitioning vital assets.

UASI funds are allocated competitively based on the completeness of and adherence to programmatic guidelines. The issue is feasibility; how well the applicant’s Investment Justification addressed the identified risk and how the proposed target hardening activity addressed the prevention of, protection against and/or mitigation of the identified risk.

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Reduction in paperwork resulted in rapid deployment of vital assets



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E-ISG understood the Taskforce’s need for an asset management platform that accounted for federal grants and the demands such grants place on emergency management organizations. Accordingly, Visual Asset Manager’s Emergency Management framework was designed specifically to meet the needs and requirements of organizations participating in UASI funding.

Through Visual Asset Manager’s report generator feature the Taskforce was able to produce reports which demonstrated where and how grant money was spent. Not only did this contribute to the organization’s eligibility for additional funds, but it also determined the most effective means towards utilizing the Taskforce’s equipment.

By utilizing Visual Asset Manager’s report generator, the Taskforce eliminated inefficient spreadsheets and focused their information on a centralized database. By cutting down on man-hours Visual Asset Manager effectively increased the Taskforce’s efficiency and end-user accountability.

Most importantly, the Taskforce’s ability to access information about their assets resulted in an increased response time to major disasters and events. Essentially, the highly accurate and fully centralized data could be accessed as needed encouraging a rapid deployment of vital assets to effected areas. There was no longer a lapse in communication or an inability to access the necessary asset information, saving the Taskforce precious time and saving countless lives.

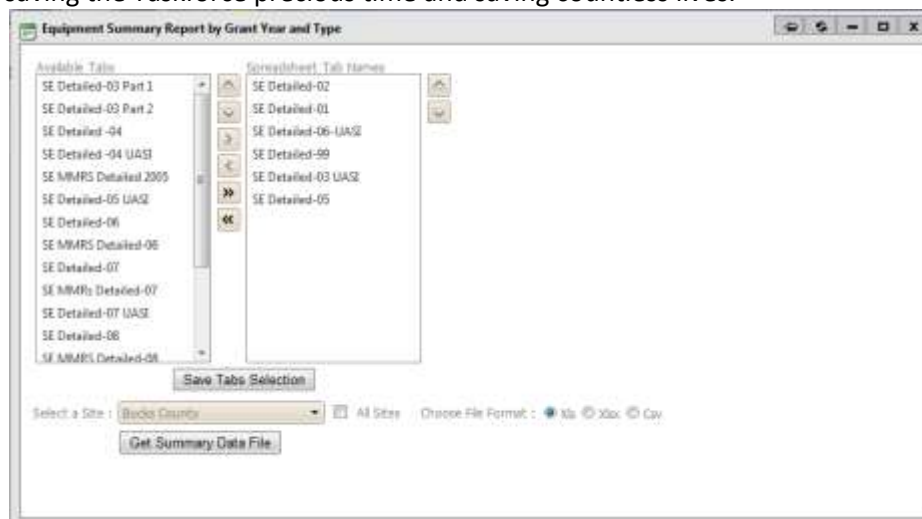


Figure 2 - Equipment Summary Report by Grant Year and Type

Asset accountability drives cost savings

Continuously, Visual Asset Manager’s ability to centralize the Taskforce’s data resulted in an increased accountability and an overall reduction in spending. Using Visual Asset Manager’s dynamic interface, the Southeastern Pennsylvania’s Regional Taskforce was able to visually observe the status and condition of their assets. By keeping track of leases and maintenance records, the Taskforce was able to reduce inefficient spending on duplicated assets while also establishing a scheduled maintenance routine which encouraged stronger asset accountability.



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Moreover, E-ISG recognized that the majority of the Taskforce's assets were time-sensitive in nature. Accordingly, the Visual Asset Manager demonstrated the time constraints of an asset's expiration date, helping to recognize which assets were being under-utilized and which were in higher demand. Logically this helped the Taskforce streamline their spending habits, effectively maximizing their grant allocations. While Visual Asset Managers dynamic features render it a powerful tool for any organization, its true value is in its ease of use.

"We've got everything at our finger tips - everything we need to know about every purchase we've ever made is available at the click of a mouse," said Bill York.

About E-Innovative Services Group

E-Innovative Services Group (E-ISG) specializes in fixed and mobile asset management by addressing the unique challenges organizations face when attempting to reconcile their physical inventory. Through the use of cutting-edge technology and a dedicated customer support team, E-ISG has helped organizations revamp their asset management process by facilitating total asset visibility, encouraging the continuity of operations, increasing the quality of data collection and coordinating an ever increasing range of assets and employees.

E-ISG has seamlessly integrated data gathering, synchronization and correlation features into our low-cost asset management software, Visual Asset Manager (VAM), which is designed specifically for the Windows Mobile platform.

Visual Asset Manager simplifies asset management. VAM is an asset tracking software designed to control and manage mobile and fixed assets. This comprehensive software centrally manages what assets you have, where they are located, who uses them and all associated costs. A dynamic asset tracking solution, Visual Asset Manager has extensive barcoding and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technologies and functions built in.

With Visual Asset Manager you have complete control over how your entire organization uses company property, effectively saving time and improving bottom line expenditures. Thanks to Visual Asset Manager's instant audit and mobile work flow tools, centralized data is kept fresh and accurate at all times.

Be accountable for your assets and determine true cost of business with Visual Asset Manager