Challenges of Emergency Response System Implementation in Kurdistan

Esri International User Conference | 27-July-2012
1. The Ministry of Health in Kurdistan has recently implemented their first CAD System (Computer-Aided Dispatch).

2. This paper describes the challenges that were faced to be able to launch this system, and how they were overcome.
1. Introducing Kurdistan
2. Introducing the Ministry of Health
3. Describing the legacy emergency system
4. Briefing about the implemented project
5. Describing the project components
6. Detailing the GIS component
7. Listing the factors for a successful GIS system
8. Describing the challenges faced in each factor
About Kurdistan

1. Kurdistan “Land of the Kurds” is the Northern part of Iraq.
2. It operates under an independent Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).
3. KRG consists of 3 main Governorates: Erbil, Sulaimaniya, Duhok.
4. Official Languages are Kurdish and Arabic.
Erbil Governorate

1. Erbil City is the capital of Erbil Governorate
2. It is also the capital of KRG and the main business center
3. The image shows Erbil city with the central Erbil citadel which houses the “old city”
Duhok Governorate
Sulamaniya Governorate

The Ministry of Health

Each Directorate operates under its own procedures.
The Legacy Emergency System

1. Emergency Response System existed in Sulaimaniya Governorate:
   a. Dedicated 122 phoneline
   b. Ambulances are dispatched manually to respond mainly to road accidents and to transfer patients between hospitals.

2. No Emergency Response System existed in Erbil or Duhok.
The Implemented Project

1. The project was funded by a grant.
2. It was an ambitious undertaking in less than 2 years, involving multiple parties.
1. The project components were:
   a. Building 3 ECC’s (Emergency Coordination Centers), one in each Governorate
   b. Establishing a radio communication system for communication between the ECC’s and the ambulances
   c. Establishing a common 122 emergency phone line across Kurdistan
   d. Staffing the ECC’s and providing medical training
   e. Establishing the GIS CAD/AVL system...
1. Installing GPS devices in 112 ambulances for tracking the locations of the ambulances
2. Equipping the ECC’s with the servers and workstations required to run the dispatch software (3 dispatcher seats per shift per ECC)
3. Installing and configuring the CAD/AVL software
4. Acquiring and integrating map data from government entities in KRG
5. Training the ECC staff on using the CAD/AVL software and on handling emergency situations.
1. As any GIS system, the success of the CAD/AVL system relied on the successful integration of the following components:
   a. Data
   b. Software
   c. Hardware
   d. People
   e. Procedures & Analysis
Challenge 1: Data

1. The Need:
   a. Reliable and up-to-date map data

2. The Challenge:
   a. No single official source of maps exists
   b. Several government entities have data but are reluctant to share it
   c. The existing data is not being updated
Challenge 1: Data

1. The Resolution:
   a. Data was collected from the different government sources with the influence of the Minister of Health and consolidated into one map for all the 3 governorates.
   b. In cases of duplicate data, the more recent and more comprehensive set of data was retained.
   c. ...
Challenge 2: Data

c. Procedure for continuous data update by the ECC employees was set (but not
Challenge 2: Data

1. The Need:
   a. Navigable Road Network for the CAD/AVL user to determine the nearest ambulance to an incident and determine the shortest path

2. The Challenge:
   a. Navigable network might exist for some Duhok cities by commercial companies, but no comprehensive network is available for use.
Challenge 2: Data

1. The Resolution:
   a. Standard street maps were used instead, with the nearest ambulance determined by straight-line distance.
   b. CAD software is ready to be configured with navigable road network, should it become available in the future.
Challenge 3: Data

1. The Need:
   a. Proper Addressing System to be able to record the locations of incidents provided by the citizens dialing the 122 number

2. The Challenge:
   a. In Kurdistan, there are attempts to have a formal and unified addressing system for all KRG, but no such system is available to-date
Challenge 3: Data

1. The Resolution:
   a. The system was configured to mimic real-life where addresses are given based on a certain known landmark.
   b. Addresses were based on nearest Landmarks and Sub-district names inside cities, and based on Landmarks and Village names outside cities (Example: near Mateen Bank in Semel), with the ability to add a text description of the location.
Challenge 4: Software, Hardware and Communications

1. The Need:
   a. State-of-the-art technology was required to run the system efficiently and to handle the capacity of calls and data to be stored

2. The Challenge:
   a. High-end servers and equipment are not available in the local market
   b. Strict customs procedures do not allow the importing of goods without authorization
Challenge 4: Software, Hardware and Communications

1. The Resolution:
   a. The equipment was ordered at an early time to allow for customs delays.
   b. The Ministry of Health issued the legal clearance papers to allow for importing the equipment.
   c. Specialists from USA and Lebanon performed the installation and setup and knowledge handover to appointed ECC Administrators.
Challenge 5: Software, Hardware and Communications

1. The Need:
   a. AVL requires stable high-speed Internet connection at the ECC’s to receive AVL messages from the ambulances (sent by GSM/GPRS connection).

2. The Challenge:
   a. It was very difficult to achieve a stable Internet connection. Internet experiences frequent cuts and slowness, disrupting the AVL display for the dispatchers.
   b. GSM/GPRS coverage is not uniform. Rural and mountainous areas have poor GSM coverage.
Challenge 5: Software, Hardware and Communications

1. The Resolution:
   a. The CAD/AVL system was configured to operate in full offline mode when needed. All incoming incidents can be recorded but only ambulance visibility is temporarily disrupted.
Challenge 6: People

1. The Need:
   a. Skilled employees trained on emergency procedures and on the CAD/AVL software to operate the ECC’s and handle emergency calls

2. The Challenge:
   a. The Ministry of Health staff had very poor computer skills
   b. Most users spoke only Kurdish. Some spoke Kurdish and Arabic. Very few knew English.
   c. The trainers spoke mainly English and also Arabic
Challenge 6: People

1. The Resolution:
   a. More time was allocated to training than usually required to learn the CAD/AVL software.
   b. Translators were brought in to translate from English to Kurdish or Arabic to Kurdish.
   c. Trainers focused on empowering one or two skilled users with all the knowledge, and appointing them to assist the other users in daily operations.
Challenge 6: People
Challenge 7: People

1. The Need:
   a. Citizen awareness of the 122 emergency centers and the services they offer

2. The Challenges:
   a. In Sulaimaniya, people had little confidence in the legacy system and resorted to driving the injured to the hospital themselves.
   b. With the establishment of the ECC’s, people needed to know that they can rely on it.
1. The Resolution:
   a. The system was soft-launched in order to test it thoroughly and address issues before exposure to the general public
   b. Media campaigns were launched to familiarize the public with the new service
Challenge 8: Procedures & Analysis

1. The Need:
   a. The 3 Governorates needed a unified set of processes and procedures to follow.

2. The Challenge:
   a. The Ministry of Health did not have an established set of procedures for emergency handling.
1. The Resolution:
   a. The Ministry was advised to form committees to write a formal set of procedures, and to put a methodology for updating the procedures, with advice from international experts.
   b. People were trained on the new procedures and are implementing them.
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<tr>
<th>Event Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Event Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abdominal</td>
<td>Abdominal Pain</td>
<td>Explosion</td>
<td>Explosion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Airway</td>
<td>Airway Obstruction</td>
<td>Faint</td>
<td>Fainting/Syncope</td>
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<td>Allergic</td>
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<td>Altered mental status</td>
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<td>Fire</td>
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<td>Behavior/Psych</td>
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<td>Bike/Motorcycle</td>
<td>Headache</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bite</td>
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<td>Hypertension</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Breathing Issues</td>
<td>Inhalation</td>
<td>Inhalation Injury</td>
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Post-Launch

1. Cut-Live was in February 2012
2. The system has been running well, with some technical issues that are being resolved (such as Internet cuts, phone line problems...)
3. The system was a good step towards a centralized and formalized Emergency Response System. It needs continuous monitoring, and there is much room for improvement.
# Statistics

## 1. Erbil

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<th>Month</th>
<th>Received</th>
<th>Answered</th>
<th>Unanswered</th>
<th>Transfers</th>
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<th>% Unansw</th>
<th>Avg Durat.</th>
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## 2. Duhok

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## 3. Suli

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<th>Transfers</th>
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Thank You!