



Virginia Association of Counties

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2016.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Albemarle County / Charlottesville-UVA-Albemarle County Office of Emergency Management

Program Title: VEOCI and the January 22/23 2016 Winter Storm Event

Program Category: Regional Collaboration

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Kirby Felts

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: Thomas C. Foley

Title: County Executive

Signature: _____ *Thomas C. Foley*

FULL PROGRAM REVIEW

State the problem, challenge or situation faced by the locality and how the program fulfilled the awards criteria (innovation, partnering or collaboration and a model for other localities). Tell how the program was carried out, including financing and staffing, and the program's results.

Regional Collaboration Challenge – Upgrading a Regional Emergency Operating Center Technology and Use of the New Product Positively Impacted a Major Event in Albemarle County.

The Charlottesville-UVA-Albemarle County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) determined, through experience and exercises, that the information management system (WebEOC) that had been in place for many years to support emergency operations did not meet our needs. The system was clunky, hard to navigate and lacking advancements that would allow the system to interact with current technology, like mobile devices and social media.

Our community needed a robust, dynamic tool to facilitate situational awareness and information sharing in our Emergency Operations Center. We needed a system capable of:

- working in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and in the field
- communicating to users via phone, email, and SMS
- working on all modern browsers and mobile devices (iOS, Android, Windows)
- sharing information real-time
- aggregating specific incidents, messages, task status and workflows into different views/dashboards
- visualizing incident information on maps
- integrating plans, checklists, and standard operating procedures to trigger system actions
- tracking actions and deliverables
- integrating with social media

- importing and exporting data
- maintaining incident information for after-action analysis and reports
- adhering to high security standards

In addition, the system needed to support personnel that are decentralized on a daily basis, and do not perform emergency functions on a regular basis. As such, there was a significant requirement for the system to be usable with minimal training.

Why did we go with VEOCI?

The VEOCI solution satisfied the system requirements we had identified as important features that benefit the Charlottesville-UVA-Albemarle County community. VEOCI offers mobile-compatible solutions that were core capabilities during product development. It is important to regional emergency operations that users can contribute timely information to the EOC. Mobile applications and mobile-enabled views allow personnel to supply text, image, and audio data to the software. This provides a valuable operating picture to the decision makers. VEOCI is also highly customizable. VEOCI was the only software found that was highly customizable and did not require code, or programming to achieve customized views. Customizing the interface allows each user to interact with the system in the way that makes sense to them. VEOCI also allows the addition of user accounts on the fly to support growing incident response as needed.

Beyond the high-level system requirements mentioned, VEOCI also satisfies granular requirements associated with administrative control, documentation, post-event reporting, and email integration. VEOCI allows OEM to add and control user accounts for speed and flexibility. VEOCI also develops inherent documentation of the process by time-stamping all communications, and tracking all messages, images, audio files, documents, and other methods of communication through the system for complete post-event reports. VEOCI includes email integration to allow the collection of data from users outside

of the system. Add social media monitoring and GIS integration to the offering and VEOCI provides capability important to the successful implementation of processes and procedures during regional emergency response.

In 2015 VEOCI supported a demonstration phase to allow city, county and university users the opportunity to explore the system. The company showed unique support capabilities to include troubleshooting a user issue during an event, aiding in the development of custom components to the operating environment, and using feedback to improve the core system. The complete package of features detailed here supports the needs of Charlottesville-UVA-Albemarle County.

How did VEOCI work in the live situation?

After “go-live” in late 2015, the VEOCI system was put to the test during the January 2016 snowstorm that dropped up to 30 inches of snow across the city, county and university. The overall assessment was that VEOCI enabled great situational awareness for our regional response operations. Regional incident

management personnel, including city, county, university, non-profits, and State agency representatives including VDEM and VDOT collaborated using this system. VEOCI facilitated rapid communication through the built-in notification features, which were used to signal an initial alert that VEOCI would be used to provide information about the snow storm, then on-going individual notifications kept people focused on postings and tasks throughout the event.



Cville-UVA-ALB ECC @CommEmerg · Jan 23

#cville #uva #albemarle Emergency Operations Center working hard during the #snowtification



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Figure 1- EOC in operations with VEOCI

Communications among various EOC participants was great. Participants liked how VEOCI enabled others to stay informed and collaborate without having to be physically present in the EOC. We had success adding people to the VEOCI system on the fly and doing 'just-in-time' training for those in the EOC that had never seen the system. Those out in the field were able to track road hazards, power outages, infrastructure damage and resource requests.

Pictures showing road conditions and National Guard resources deployed to support Fire Rescue operations were logged in the system for all to see. Logistics support requests were submitted and fulfilled using the task capability. All information in the system is time stamped and attributed to the person that posted the information, creating a comprehensive log of the incident. Looking back on the incident details will allow us to identify opportunities for improvement.

What was the Return on Investment?

The return on investment is measured in effective information sharing that enables good decision making. For this incident, people had immediate access to information on road hazards and response operations. As details changed, updates were posted and those directly involved were alerted to the new information. Since it was a snow storm and transportation was challenging, it was extremely effective to have EOC members participate remotely while safe at home.

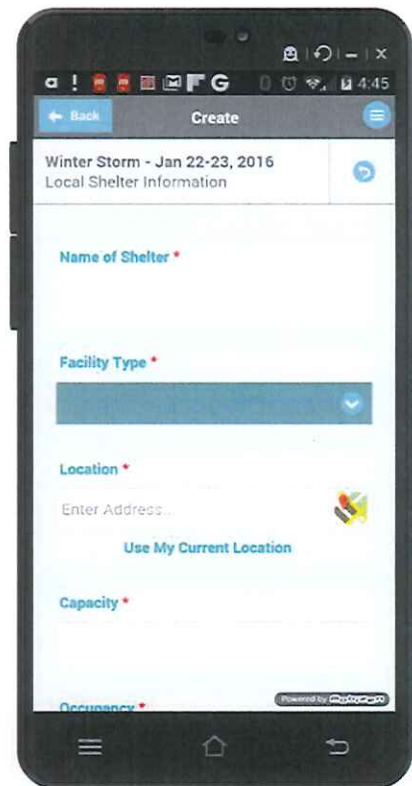


Figure 2- Mobile Resource Request in VEOCI

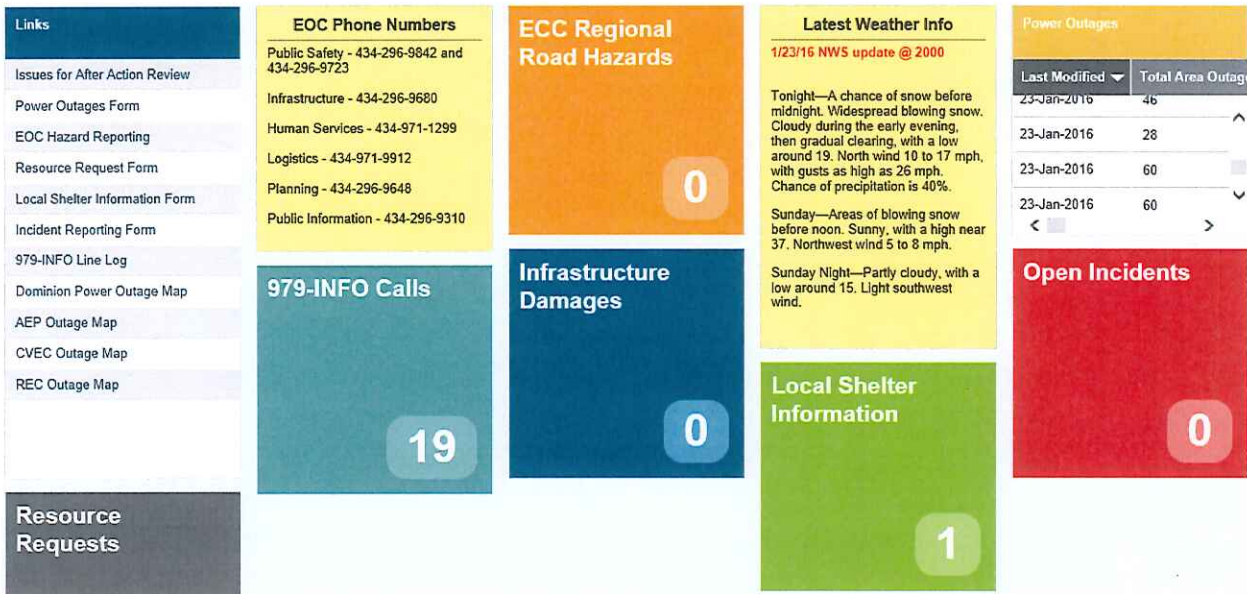


Figure 3- Incident Dashboard in VEOCI

Improvements/Changes for next time?

An improvement we will work to implement is having the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system share data with VEOCI. This will allow an immediate visual snapshot on the scope of an evolving incident.

There are likely opportunities to link with other systems to support more seamless information sharing. Better integration of GIS layers is a high priority as well.

Also, further development of pre-defined plans that can be launched to support incident response is in order as well as training for system users is needed to allow more robust use of VEOCI capabilities.

Overall VEOCI did very well as a collaborative effort among multiple agencies during a winter storm event. It can be easily used in any emergency operations center and provide immediate value.

SHORT OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM

The Charlottesville-UVA-Albemarle County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) needed a mobile enabled replacement for a legacy emergency operations center software system. After developing

requirements, and performing tests they decided on VEOCI. VEOCI was easy to implement and demonstrated many favorable characteristics during a regional event in Jan. 2016.

Our regional users, including city, county, university, non-profits, and State agency representatives, like VEOCI because it allows rapid communication between all parties, makes it easy to add new users on the fly, allows mobile upload of documents and images from scenes, and allows administrators to easily create custom dashboards based on the event to manage.

VEOCI was put to use during a snowstorm in January 2016. It provided a one stop shop for remote, and Emergency Operations Center personnel; was easy to setup; and provides a great source of reference as we prepare for future events.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF PROGRAM

The Charlottesville-UVA-Albemarle County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) needed a mobile enabled replacement for a legacy emergency operations center software system. A list of requirements was defined and VEOCI was selected as it met all the requirements.

VEOCI was used in a regional response to a major snow storm event in January 2016. Regional incident management personnel, including city, county, university, non-profits, and State agency representatives including VDEM and VDOT collaborated using this system. VEOCI provided a robust mechanism for collecting and displaying pertinent and informative data and was especially useful for those personnel who could not make it to the physical EOC.

The data and information collected via VEOCI will be useful information when preparing for a future event.