Case Study: The 20th Annual Ride For Roswell

Last year the 19th Ride For Roswell utilized DisasterLAN (DLAN) incident management software for the first time to help manage their annual event. Buffalo Computer Graphics (BCG) published a white paper describing the success of the implementation (see white paper). This year BCG follows up with coordinators to see what improvements were made during the second year. Major changes over the past year include the addition of AVL trackers, improvements in configuring the software to meet the event's particular workflow, and additional training.

Event Description

The Ride For Roswell is North America's largest single-day cycling fundraiser and the single largest annual fundraising event in Western New York, benefiting research and patient care programs at Roswell Park Cancer Institute (RPCI). Throughout its history, The Ride has raised more than $34 million for cutting-edge cancer research and compassionate, innovative patient care programs at Roswell Park Cancer Institute.

The 20th annual event was held June 26 & 27, 2015. The June 27 biking event consisted of nine rides on eight routes, ranging from 3 to 45 miles, with about 8,000 riders and 2,200 volunteers. Due to inclement weather the 102-mile and 66-mile rides were cancelled this year.
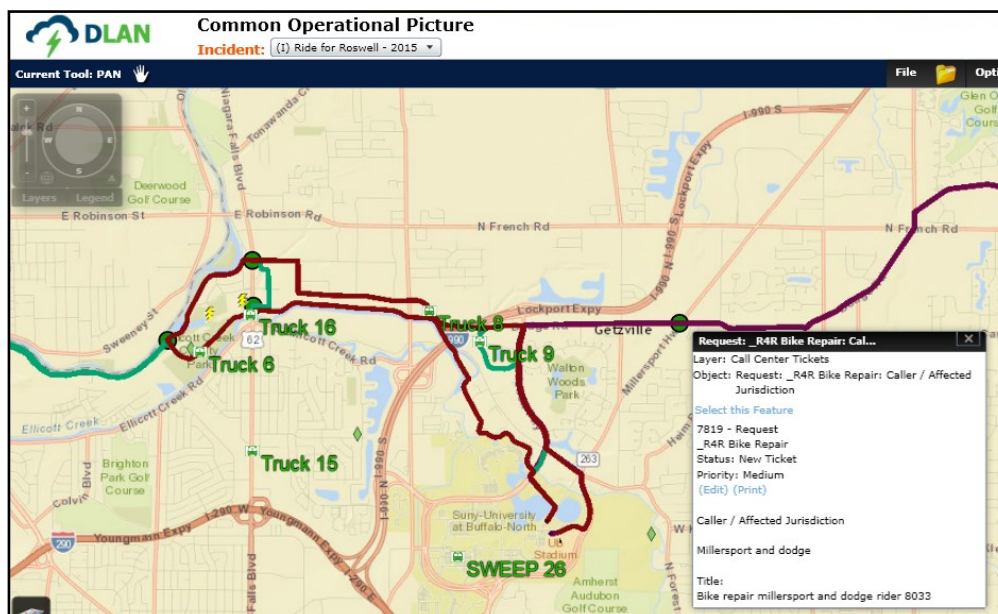
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AVL Trackers

Keeping track of resources across the large geographical area the routes entail has been a difficult task. Last year Tom Johnston, Operations Manager, noted that he wanted to be better able to track resources using DLAN, and this year he was able to do so with the use of AVL, Automatic Vehicle Location, trackers. Erie County Emergency Services Dept. loaned The Ride 20 trackers in addition to the eight they had purchased for the event. These trackers were placed in some of the service vehicles The Ride uses for bike repair and rider pick ups. Three bikers were also given trackers in order to test out their use.

Johnston was pleased with the information provided by the AVL Trackers and notes that next year he will have a better idea of precisely what they can measure based on the number of trackers available. Identifying the key people and resources to track is important to using the trackers effectively.

Being able to view AVL trackers on more screens may be beneficial as well, either by giving each volunteer two monitors so they could always see the map or having a large screen in the main call center displaying the map, as was the case in the secondary call center run out of Erie County's mobile Emergency Operation Center (EOC). This is a common configuration in EOCs and helps to improve overall situational awareness.
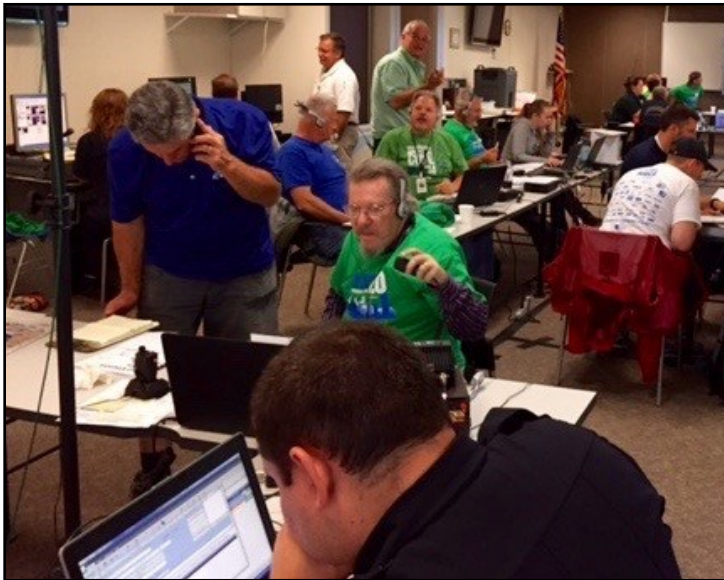
Workflow Improvements

One area The Ride planned to improve this year was configuring DLAN to be more inline with their particular workflow. Since Ride For Roswell staff use Erie County's DLAN system they do not have access to the software throughout the year and end up using many of the County's default settings for ticket management.

To help the staff work more effectively BCG used DLAN's administrator functions to configure some event specific workflow features. For example, the volunteer check in process was streamlined so that managers were not bogged down by tickets about the arrival and departure of volunteers and could focus on resolving rider issues. Some other improvements to ticket routings, i.e. which ticket types were directed to which managers, were also made to minimize the number of tickets each manager received, allowing them to focus on only the tickets that were pertinent to them and quickly identify the most urgent. Another change was rearranging the ticket kind/type list to place The Ride specific ticket kinds, such as bike repair, transportation, and locate person, at the top of the list, so there was no need for volunteers to look at Erie County's full list of ticket kinds to get to what they needed. This also sped up the process.

Information was shared with volunteers for each ticket to create consistency across all entries, which aided in quickening response times. As staff continue to use the software they will continue to improve their process and efficiency in the way they handle standard and critical incidents.

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Additional Experience/ Training

There were three factors that combined to improve volunteers' ability to utilize the software: experience from last year, a bigger training session, and a higher volume of volunteers with prior emergency management training.

The Ride For Roswell has a high rate of returning volunteers, so several of the volunteers had used the software the previous year and were able to quickly refresh themselves on its use. BCG also held a larger training at their facility where volunteers were able to log in to the software and practice creating tickets. Between having returning volunteers and training more new volunteers it was easy to pair untrained volunteers with trained volunteers on the day of the event. Though this training was valuable Betsy Ferguson, a Call Taker Supervisor, notes, "DLAN is intuitive enough that if you have a little bit of computer experience, you can learn the basics within 5 minutes." She continued that it was helpful to pair volunteers because new volunteers were able to see how things needed to be put into the system before doing it themselves. This helped volunteers not just learn how to use DLAN but to use it based on The Ride For Roswell's particular workflow.

Another improvement over last year was the addition of more CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) volunteers. Because of their additional training in emergency management, learning the DLAN software came very easily to them. DLAN utilizes the best practices in emergency management, so knowing these practices makes learning DLAN a quick and simple process.

Conclusion

As The Ride For Roswell staff continues to become more familiar with DLAN and the BCG staff continues to become more familiar with the desired workflow for the event, the software will continue to be implemented more effectively and more successfully each year.

DLAN