

featured story

Missouri Counties Receive Grant to Purchase Rugged Handhelds for Disaster Management

Home to just over 42,000 residents, Pettis County sits in west central Missouri and is the site of the annual Missouri State Fair, attracting hundreds of thousands of people to its fairgrounds every August. Tornadoes and ice storms have been known as frequent visitors to the area, with occasional floods dropping in every now and then. To help local officials better prepare for incidents such as these, several federal grant opportunities are available through the Missouri Office of Homeland Security. This past year, Pettis and seven other counties comprising the Pioneer Trails Regional Planning Commission (RPC) obtained funding to purchase a fleet of Mesa[®] Rugged Notepads to assist with emergency preparedness and disaster management.

Referred to as the Homeland Security Grant, this funding is available annually upon application and approval. Information about this grant can be found on Missouri's Department of Public Safety website at www.dps.mo.gov/dir/grants.asp. In selecting a grant application to submit, the state of Missouri has nine multidisciplinary Regional Homeland Security Oversight Committees (RHSOC), made up of representatives from emergency management, law enforcement, the health department, agriculture, county mayors, and GIS, among others, who write and submit grant applications based on county needs. To identify the needs of the counties, each RHSOC conducts a Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment. This involves presenting three different scenarios—in this case, a tornado, an ice storm, and a train derailment with hazardous material—and determining what actions need to be taken and what resources/equipment the counties are lacking. From this, the Pioneer Trails RPC identified rugged handheld computers as a critical equipment need.

Members of the Pioneer Trails RPC first caught sight of the Mesa Rugged Notepad in the aftermath of the 2011 tornado in Joplin, Missouri. Esri GIS experts came to assist local officials there with disaster management,



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James Theisen
Director of Technologies
Pettis County, Missouri

Customer Story



bringing with them several Mesas to collect the data they needed. After taking only one day to collect all of the necessary data, members of the Pioneer Trails RPC were convinced that the Mesa was the rugged handheld they wanted.

James Theisen, Director of Technologies for Pettis County, said of first using the Mesa: "It showed not only the capabilities of the Mesa, but also the fact that at the end of the day, it could do the job. It was evident very quickly that it was a powerful tool." He added that the Mesa's features also swayed them in its favor, especially its large, easy-to-read screen, rugged build, camera, and the ease with which they were able to extract their data reports. Recently, Juniper Systems' Adrian Welsh, Applications Support Engineer, flew out to Pettis County for an onsite training to assist people there with learning how to use the Mesa for their wide variety of needs.

With the Mesas they purchased using the grant, county officials will be collecting a wide variety of data, depending on the county. This data will be collected regionally, and then stored on a centralized database shared among counties. People with varying levels of experience will be using the Mesa mainly with Esri's ArcPad and ArcGIS Mobile to map and collect data on assets and infrastructure. Information about gas shutoffs, fire hydrants, water lines, and other important assets will be critical in case of an incident, as well as in disaster planning exercises. In disaster cases, the Mesas will be used to assess damages to aid in the request of FEMA relief funds. The Mesas will also be used by the highway department to conduct daily roadside inventories and inspections, the assessor's office during reassessment years, and other departments. Collected data will be used in schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and other centers in order to coordinate and disperse information in times of emergency.

With the new Mesas, officials in Pettis and the surrounding counties feel that they will be better prepared for emergencies in the future. Stamped with an IP67 rating for dust and water, a MIL-STD-810G certification, and a ruggedness built to withstand just about anything, the Mesas will be able to provide long-lasting benefits to people of Missouri for years to come.



County officials receive training on how to use the Mesa for their wide variety of needs.



The Mesas will be used for asset and infrastructure mapping, roadside inventories, inspections, and damage assessment, among other things.

Mesa® Features:

- Extra-large 5.7" display
- 806 MHz processor
- 4 GB flash storage
- 3.2MP camera
- PC & microSD card slots
- Bluetooth® wireless technology
- USB host & USB client on board
- RS-232 serial 9 pin connector