



# BlackBerry Customer Success Story

## California Municipality Uses GPS and Freance Mobile App for the BlackBerry Solution to Streamline Field Inspection, Maintenance, and Reporting



The City of Oxnard in California serves a community of nearly 200,000 residents with 1,200 municipal employees. One of their most important municipal operations is conducting regular field inspections and maintenance of local waterways, including storm drainage canals and catch basins.

**Industry:** Government & Public Sector

**Region:** North America

**Company Size:**

Municipal government with 1,200 employees

**Email Platform:**

Novell® GroupWise®

**Solution:** Freance Mobile™ - Pro Edition from TDC Group, Inc.

### THE CHALLENGE

Field personnel in Oxnard, CA have traditionally performed inspection work by recording observations with paper and pen. Paper forms limit the amount of information one can practically collect and initiates a series of labor-intense operational procedures back at the office, potentially causing delays in mandated periodic reporting to regulatory agencies. Consistency of data is also a challenge because individuals record information differently.

A paper-based approach caused delays in getting information to city managers and officials - delays that could hinder the ability to make decisions and respond quickly when safety issues arise or to maintain regulatory compliance. For example, debris in storm drainage canals can cause a potential public safety hazard if not dealt with in a timely way. "We wanted a technology solution that could provide managers with better information about potential problems in the city, as the problems are discovered, so we could respond more quickly," says David Endelman, Oxnard's GIS Coordinator.

### THE SOLUTION

The City of Oxnard deployed BlackBerry® smartphones and an application called Freance Mobile™ - Pro Edition to mobilize the way data was collected during the inspection and cleaning of storm drains.

Using their BlackBerry smartphones, field inspectors get GPS location information and take photographs of problems encountered in open channels and catch basins, and then record critical data about the event using a form generated by the Freance Mobile application.

The form was custom-built to Oxnard's needs and to synchronize with their back-end database. The form allows maintenance staff to capture accurate descriptions of the debris encountered and removed during inspections. Several drop-down menus are provided which let workers categorize debris events by selecting data from several fields. These options allow maintenance workers to select the name of the drain, trash type, trash sub-type, weather conditions, and other data items from the pre-existing menus, without having to key their selection in using the keyboard.

Integrated BlackBerry GPS technology automatically adds location data to the collected information. The data is sent from the BlackBerry smartphone to the BlackBerry® Enterprise Server behind Oxnard's firewall, and then on to their ESRI ArcGIS server, the back-end database that manages field inspection data.

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David Endelman  
GIS Coordinator  
City of Oxnard, CA

The entire system replaces handwritten forms and data inputting and helps send information to the correct city administrator. This data layer, combined with other GIS layers such as land use and the storm drain collection system, allow staff the ability to visualize the field-identified issues and assist in the identification of problem sources.

“Pictures help everyone see exactly what sort of problems we might be dealing with,” says Endelman. “Situations are captured in vivid color and communicated to a manager almost instantly. With this richer level of information, our city administrators are able to respond faster and make better decisions.”

## CITY OF OXNARD'S BENEFITS

The geo-coded images of storm drain channel debris that are gathered by the BlackBerry smartphone can help the city proactively identify areas of public safety risk before problems arise. The data and images also provide a more complete picture of the debris situation to help determine where the problem originated. “The BlackBerry solution is giving us good information from the field and that can contribute to helping us keep waterways and surrounding areas safer,” says Endelman.

Replacing the paper forms with a mobile solution helps to solve the problem of data inconsistency. Field workers now have an easy-to-follow form on their BlackBerry smartphones that guides them through the data collection process. The solution adds operational efficiencies because it frees up office support staff from the labor-intensive job of transcribing handwritten forms. “Our BlackBerry solution is a good example of how technology can improve efficiencies. It has certainly eliminated a lot of paper-based processes within local governments,” says Endelman. “And, faster data flow speeds up decision-making in operational issues.”

Endelman says the integrated BlackBerry GPS is easier to use than the standalone GPS units they tried in the past. “Other devices have too high of a learning curve. The BlackBerry smartphone is an all-in-one device and much more intuitive.”

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## KEY BENEFITS

- Easy-to-use, all-in-one device for the field
  - Increased office staff productivity
  - Faster access to information helps speed up decision making
  - Better understanding of situations can enhance safety
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