LAPD Tests Situational Awareness Tool

Sarah Rich | October 15, 2013

Mobile and touchscreen mapping technologies are some of the latest innovations that the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) is using to improve situational awareness in the city.

To more effectively oversee patrol areas and move past paper maps, the LAPD has been piloting TouchShare, a solution that produces real-time visual geospatial information that is collected and mapped out on a single screen. The combined data gives officers at the command center an aerial vantage point of large-scale events and the ability to zoom in and out on what's displayed. Police can communicate with one another on any changes or updates based off the information seen on the screen.

"TouchShare lets everyone view and contribute to what others are seeing in real time and ensures that everyone has the most accurate, current and relevant data, so emergency situations can be dealt with quickly and precisely," said TouchShare CEO Bob Pette, in a statement.

According to LAPD Officer Chris Bouse, the LAPD first tested TouchShare during the 2011 NBA All-Star Game and its related activities in Los Angeles. For the game, the LAPD laid out a map of the entire venue and used it to mark all of the facility's surveillance camera positions, personnel positions and where certain smaller events within the entire event were taking place. Bouse added that having a more comprehensive visual also helped with pre-planning in case a disaster occurred.

Since 2011, the LAPD has continued testing the technology for various events. But Bouse explained that ideally, the department would like to expand the technology's use for other law enforcement work, including predictive policing and emergency preparedness.

"It's one of those things where the potential of it is almost limitless," Bouse said. "It's going to be one of those products that doesn't do just one thing."

Future Use

The LAPD would like to use TouchShare in a variety of other ways. One idea on the table is to connect all police departments in California over satellite, enabling agencies to use TouchShare to better coordinate rescue efforts and request supplies during a disaster situation.

If personnel all have access to TouchShare, the LAPD's command center can send out real-time visual imagery to officers in the field to help with faster response. If response plans need to change, the command center can make adjustments based on what they'r e seeing.

LAPD command staff also use iPads to connect personnel and view TouchShare maps. But according to Bouse, budgetary challenges may limit further expansion.

http://www.govtech.com/public-safety/LAPD-Tests-Situational-Awareness-Tool.html