COUNTRY FIRE AUTHORITY

SAP® SOFTWARE HELPS PUBLIC SAFETY ORGANIZATION PREPARE FOR EMERGENCIES

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Michael Foreshew, Executive Manager, Technology Services, Country Fire Authority

QUICK FACTS

Company
- Name: Country Fire Authority (CFA)
- Headquarters: Victoria, Australia
- Industry: Public sector
- Products and services: Emergency management services
- Budget: US$368 million
- Staff: 60,424 members, including 58,943 volunteers, 495 career firefighters, and 986 other employees and officers
- Web site: www.cfa.vic.gov.au
- Implementation partner: Fujitsu Australia and New Zealand

Challenges and Opportunities
Improve communication with residents for emergency preparedness

Objectives
Install customer relationship management (CRM) software for "marketing and campaign management" to ensure citizen safety

SAP® Solutions and Services
SAP® CRM application, part of the SAP Emergency Management for Public Sector package

Implementation Highlights
- Rapid, 12-week rollout
- Prototyping approach
- Early involvement of users for feedback

Why SAP
- Comprehensive functionality
- Immediate usability without customization
- Good integration with stand-alone contact management systems
- Ability to meet organization's future requirements

Benefits
- Enabled authority to create risk profiles for residents, households, and businesses and better assess emergency requirements during an incident
- Achieved a better way of interacting with the community
- Made it much easier for people to attend community meetings
- Enabled authority to run 3 times as many meetings as before

Existing Environment
Spreadsheets and manual processes

Third-Party Integration
- Database: Oracle
- Hardware: IBM
- Operating system: IBM AIX

You might not think customer relationship management (CRM) software and firefighting go together. But then you wouldn't be thinking as creatively as the Country Fire Authority (CFA), the Victoria, Australia–based emergency management organization that implemented the SAP® Customer Relationship Management application, which is included in the SAP Emergency Management for Public Sector package.

"SAP CRM enables CFA staff to communicate with citizens and provides an infrastructure for the transfer of crucial information and updates during emergency situations," says Michael Foreshew, CFA's executive manager of technology services. "We've been using the SAP software to gather contact details and demographic data. This allows us to create profiles on residents, households, and businesses, with heightened granularity around specific risks. We see this as a significant step toward improving services for our communities and enabling better communication."

That's because the stakes are so high. On February 7, 2009, known in Australia as Black Saturday, the world's eighth worst fire disaster in recorded history swept across the state of Victoria. Bushfires burned throughout the month, destroying more than 3,500 structures. Tragically, 173 Victorian residents died, and 414 were injured.

This brought the community closer together. Citizens became more engaged in fire safety initiatives and preparations. And CFA turned to SAP CRM.

"Marketing Campaign" for Citizen Safety

With SAP CRM, CFA can proactively e-mail residents about fire preparedness and provide risk status updates. The authority also uses SAP CRM to alert residents of community meetings. "Residents log on to our Web site, enter their contact and demographic data, and book themselves into the meetings," Foreshew says. "These community gatherings provide an additional opportunity for citizens to register details, and they include fire management training through a program called Community Fireguard. This initiative ensures that Victorians are prepared for emergency situations."

> "We picked SAP CRM because it worked smoothly and because we could use it without customizations."
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> **Michael Foreshew,** Executive Manager, Technology Services, Country Fire Authority

Foreshew gives credit to SAP CRM for improving preparedness among Victoria citizens. "The fact is, we've now got a much better way of interacting with the community," he says. "SAP CRM has made it much easier for people to attend these meetings. We run three times as many meetings as before, with a 150% increase in the number of people attending. There was just no way we could have done that with the previous manual process. We wouldn't have been able to meet the preparations for this year's fire season without SAP Customer Relationship Management."

A Shift in Community Culture

The SAP software has also brought about a shift in local culture. "What we are finding is that a new community spirit has emerged," Foreshew says. "Citizens are now reaching out to us on behalf of relatives or people they know, or for people they know who are living in high-risk areas. They will give us information about residents who, for example, might live down at the end of a particular road where there's only one way out – or maybe they don't drive. SAP CRM is enabling us to create a two-way relationship with the community, and it is helping community members strengthen their relationships with each other."

That, in turn, has made the community more deeply appreciate CFA – something every public sector agency finds gratifying. "The community now recognizes that we are an organization that is open to change and innovation, and that's fantastic," Foreshew says. "Our implementation of SAP CRM has shown citizens and businesses that we are a progressive, forward-thinking organization that's creating more and better ways to help."

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Premier Emergency Management Organization

CFA is one of the world's largest volunteer-based emergency management organizations, with a staff of 60,424 that includes 58,943 volunteers, 495 career firefighters, and 986 other employees and officers. More than 1,200 CFA brigades service Victoria and outer metropolitan Melbourne. The authority, which has been in existence for more than 100 years as a firefighting force, covers all private land outside the central business districts, encompassing 65% of the state's population.

Recently, CFA's responsibilities for responding to urban and transport risks have grown substantially. It manages statewide radio communications – including dispatch, paging, and fire ground control – through the coordinated deployment of 10,000 radios, 1,800 radio towers, and 30,000 pagers.

"We have legislative responsibilities to protect life, livelihood, and property – in that order," Foreshew says. "We do that in two different ways. One is through firefighting, rescuing people, and responding to car accidents and hazardous spills. The other way is through proactive incident management, primarily via education. We go to schools, retirement villages, and other venues and help people with their fire and evacuation plans. We do a lot of community engagement."

Safety First

Safety is at the top of the list for public security agencies in today's complicated world. But these agencies often rely on processes and technologies that limit visibility and hinder communications and execution of plans.

As part of the SAP Emergency Management for Public Sector package, SAP CRM is tailored to meet the demanding requirements of public security agencies. The SAP application covers investigative case management and incident and emergency management – and can integrate with, and augment, systems currently in place. By unifying people, processes, and information, the software facilitates collaboration and communication so citizens are safer.

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"Information technology can improve community safety," says Foreshew. "Our men and women are contributing their time – and in a lot of cases, they are putting their lives on the line. The least I can do is support them in the best way possible so they can operate with the confidence that the organization is behind them 100%."

Immediate Benefits

Previously, CFA organized community meetings through spreadsheets, printouts, and word of mouth; fliers were attached to telephone poles and bulletin boards. The emergency management organization realized that, to better engage with the community and disseminate the necessary information, it had to make the process better.

CFA evaluated a number of CRM solutions before choosing SAP software. Foreshew, who had previously developed a customer relationship management strategy for a financial services company, led the process. "We sorted through the top providers," he says. "This was going to be a really important decision because it had to be a core solution for CFA moving forward. In the end, we came down to two options. We picked SAP CRM because it worked smoothly and because we could use it without customizations."

Rapid, 12-Week Rollout

CFA worked with implementation partner Fujitsu Australia and New Zealand, a leading service provider of business, information technology, and communications solutions. Fujitsu provides everything from strategic consulting and application and infrastructure development to IT products and services.

The emergency management organization chose Fujitsu based on the IT service provider's product knowledge, implementation approach and experience, and quality of staff. Says Foreshew, "Fujitsu worked with CFA staff to understand our organization's needs, and it made sure the software could be implemented within a tight timeline – before the upcoming fire danger period."

Fujitsu created a prototype for CFA to demonstrate various aspects of the solution early on in the project – which was completed in 12 weeks. "CRM for emergency services is a new concept," Foreshew says. "Fujitsu identified the key requirements and built the solution around them. The Fujitsu team worked extremely well with CFA. It was a smooth implementation; the partner made the project very easy for us."

SAP CRM: Helping to Build Stronger Communities

From the CFA home page, Victoria's citizens now have immediate access to information regarding community planning, incident and recovery meetings, and at least 20 programs to increase their awareness of bushfire risk and preparedness; user-friendly search tools enable them to easily locate meetings according to their interests and needs and to find events within their municipality or township.

Foreshew says the meetings help build and strengthen self-reliant communities – and enable CFA to deliver quality services, improve safety, and extend its capabilities across the state of Victoria. "SAP CRM can help us better manage the volume of people we need to communicate with throughout the difficult summer months."

SAP CRM not only helps CFA manage volume – it helps the authority ensure transparency. "SAP CRM has enabled us to get a lot more clarity and unearth information we had no way of capturing and analyzing before," Foreshew says. "As a result, we've been able to become more intimate with the people we serve and better understand the changing nature of incidents. This will help us going forward."

Summing up, he says, "Our driver is the preservation of life through effective emergency management. With SAP CRM, we are now confident that thousands of community members will benefit from having ready access to the information they need, and we will have greater efficiency in allocating our own resources."

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