Eagle County: Prepared for natural disasters

Eagle County use[s] [Google] Maps Platform an[d] [...] to redesign its em[ergency] operations cente[r] [to] improve the deliv[ery of] crisis informatio[n to] Colorado residen[ts during] natural disasters.

Google Cloud

About Eagle County

Located in the Rocky Mountains in western Colorado, Eagle County is comprised of the Eagle River Valley and a portion of the Roaring Fork Valley, including two world renowned ski resorts and the White River National Forest, the most visited national forest in the United States. Eagle County Government provides building and planning, road and bridge, public health, human services, public safety, housing, public transportation, and other local government services to more than 50,000 residents.

Industries: Government & Public Sector

Location: United States

Results

- Supported evacuation of 3,500 Eagle County residents during the Lake Christine Fire
- Created map for fire emergency information that received 550,000 views during evacuation
- Improves emergency coordination and collaboration among response teams

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evacu
1,700

Products: Google Maps Platform

Google Maps Platform (https://cloud.google.com/maps-platform/)

atform/), G

G Suite (https://gsuite.google.com/)

Gmail (https://gsuite.google.com/products/gmail/)

(https://gsuite.google.com/products/gmail/),

Docs (https://gsuite.google.com/products/docs/)

(https://gsuite.google.com/products/docs/)

Google Drive (https://gsuite.google.com/products/drive/)

Forms (https://gsuite.google.com/products/forms/)

(https://gsuite.google.com/products/forms/),

Sheets (https://gsuite.google.com/products/sheets/)

Sites

Sites (https://gsuite.google.com/products/sites/)

Hangouts Meet

Hangouts Meet (https://gsuite.google.com/products/meet/)

With terrain ranging from rugged, snowy mountain peaks to lush valleys, Eagle County, Colorado (http://www.eaglecounty.us/) can experience its fair share of natural disasters, from dramatic weather events to fires and floods. During certain seasons,

these conditions can become dangerous and Eagle County Government officials are always looking to improve how they broadcast emergency information. More than 50,000 Coloradans call Eagle County home and the county also hosts hundreds of thousands of tourists throughout the year, all there to enjoy the beauty of the Colorado Rockies.

"There is absolutely no time to waste in a disaster," says Jill Ryan, Eagle County Commissioner. "For the safety of all of our residents, visiting tourists, and emergency response teams, we needed a way to quickly communicate important information to help ensure everyone's safety."

Eagle County solved this problem by centralizing its crisis management approach. By reorganizing its emergency operations center (EOC) around [Google Maps Platform](https://cloud.google.com/maps-platform/) (https://cloud.google.com/maps-platform/) and cloud solutions, the county is helping ensure that the tools are on hand to respond quickly to dangerous events.

"We rely on Google Maps because that's what the public uses. Government

done well speaks to people where they are, and people are in Google Maps so it was critical, particularly during a crisis, to convey important information in a familiar platform. We need to know vital emergency news can be quickly viewed and shared."

—Brandon Williams, Innovation and Strategy Manager, Eagle County Government

Keeping everyone informed

The Lake Christine Fire, which started in July 2018, created many challenges for Eagle County officials. Beginning outside Basalt, Colorado, the fire burned more than 12,000 acres throughout the region. Within this high-pressure scenario, Eagle County planned to migrate its emergency operations center to Google Cloud.

Maps was a central part of the county's communication strategy, as Eagle County needed a solution that could serve as an emergency information portal for both residents and tourists. As part of this strategy, the county created a Lake Christine Fire map
 (https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=16Y1l3pT9_y3WInrY8CmYwJTh4MjwVVod&ll=39.4030850471459%2C-107.04965849999996&z=12)
that posted real-time updates during the wildfire: people could see information including road closures, driving directions, and evacuation center locations. Active hyperlink support also meant that county officials could efficiently redirect people to other emergency pages right within Maps.

For potential floods following the fire, the county also exported its internal analysis information and created a second map
 (https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1HcHwtWms0Uv0Ccrh-RDLdArGTOYqmcMG&%3Bll=39.411987367449875%2C-107.0396179390869&%3Bz=13&ll=39.41820997001786%2C-107.04170099999999&z=12)
that residents could use to see if their homes fell within a flood risk zone. With this map, at-risk homeowners could easily learn about insurance subsidies and other flood resources.

Despite the high stakes, the move to Maps was a success for the employees in Eagle County. The ease of use for accessing the app made the fire map a crucial public outreach tool. As developments came in, EOC staffers could push real-time updates and provide residents with live information without having to manually update the county site for every instance.

Eagle County: The Lake Christine Fire, July 2018

The county map was an equally important resource for people in Eagle County. According to officials, more than 3,500 residents in about 1,700 homes were evacuated, and the fire map was viewed nearly 550,000 times. On social media, Eagle County officials also saw multiple residents credit the fire map with helping them evacuate and find out if their homes were safe.

"We rely on Google Maps because that's what the public uses," says Brandon Williams, Innovation and Strategy Manager, Eagle County Government. "Government done well speaks to people where they are, and people are in Google Maps so it was critical, particularly during a crisis, to convey important information in a familiar platform. We need to know vital emergency news can be quickly viewed and shared."

"With all the federal and state teams involved in disaster response, we needed a solution that simplified

collaboration across groups. G Suite removes the barriers from our emergency operations center, so we can quickly respond to any situation to keep people safe."

—Brandon Williams, Innovation and Strategy Manager, Eagle County Government

Building a virtual Emergency Operations Center

The Eagle County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) previously relied on a legacy workflow environment with specialized industry features, but in high-pressure scenarios, the system struggled to support collaborative work. Employees were often using digital versions of paper forms and had to resort to phone calls or emails for communication.

"Our old workflow was fractured," says Brandon. "Teams could spend more time chasing the right

information than trying to get it out to the public or to other agencies."

Eagle County redesigned its entire EOC around G Suite (https://gsuite.google.com/) solutions to remove these hurdles. For the Lake Christine Fire, Eagle County centralized its emergency response coordination and strategy on Docs (https://gsuite.google.com/products/docs/). On the shared pages, Eagle County officials published information ranging from fire department updates to volunteer donation locations, pairing it with Hangouts Chat (https://gsuite.google.com/products/chat/) and Hangouts Meet (https://gsuite.google.com/products/meet/) for real-time communication. At its peak, Eagle County says that its Docs page held 340 people, while its Hangouts room housed 117 chat members.

For remote work, Forms (https://gsuite.google.com/products/forms/) assisted Eagle County staffers in the field and helped them easily collect information from residents who needed post-fire assistance. The county also used Sites (https://gsuite.google.com/products/sites/) to create mobile-friendly public pages where residents could quickly find information such as air quality updates and safety procedures in English and Spanish. Gmail (https://gsuite.google.com/products/gmail/), Drive (https://gsuite.google.com/products/drive/), and Sheets (https://gsuite.google.com/products/sheets/) were used

by employees for general administration and office support work.

"G Suite enabled us to work more efficiently," says Brandon. "During the Lake Christine Fire, we needed to coordinate response with all county, state, and federal partners. We relied on G Suite."

"The social aspect of G Suite motivated our human resources to activate and support emergency operations in any way they could. The collaboration tools streamlined the coordination of information and resources during a time of crisis."

Even though its EOC solution hosted hundreds of users at a time, Eagle County officials found that they didn't even need to do significant platform training. Because of the ease of using G Suite tools, people could simply open a link and work without extensive onboarding. For Eagle County, which now plans to add Chromebooks into its EOC and make G Suite a productivity solution for its entire office, finding a platform to facilitate this fast collaboration and team building was invaluable.

"With all the federal and state teams involved in disaster response, we needed a solution that simplified collaboration across groups," explains Brandon. "G Suite removes the barriers from our emergency operations center, so we can quickly respond to any situation to keep people safe."

Protecting people from danger

Rapid, reliable coordination is essential during emergencies, as responders need to work quickly to minimize threats to civilians and damage to property.

"Cloud tools are replacing traditional responder tools because they're simpler, they work, and they're reliable," says Brandon. "Our emergency operations center uses Google Maps and G Suite to focus on what's really important, which is enabling us to work together to get people assistance when they need it most."

"The social aspect of G Suite motivated our human resources to activate and support emergency operations in any way they could," adds Angelo Fernandez, Director of Human Resources and Organizational Development, Eagle County Government. "The collaboration tools streamlined the coordination of information and resources during a time of crisis."