



NSW Rural Fire Service

Digitising emergency response



New South Wales Rural Fire Service (RFS) is transforming how it deals with emergencies. By partnering with Fujitsu, the RFS is digitising mission-critical systems and providing faster response times, improved coordination and greater safety for firefighters and communities.

Challenge

RFS needed to update their voice-only systems that limited real-time information sharing to improve response times and enhance coordination with volunteer firefighters.

Solution

Fujitsu delivered an integrated, data-driven emergency response solution, combining a Computer Aided Dispatch system (CAD) and in-vehicle Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs).

Outcomes

- The integration of in-field MDTs with the CAD dispatch system created a single source of truth for incidents
- Real time intelligence sharing enhanced situational awareness, decision speed and safety

"The partnership with Fujitsu, underpinned by shared values of trust, innovation, and community, exemplifies how the RFS is embracing change to meet emerging challenges."

Rob Rogers, Commissioner NSW Rural Fire Service



5,000

RFS vehicles with MDT terminals providing mission critical information (after the project is finished)

Delivering data when every second counts

The Black Summer bushfire season of 2019–2020 was the toughest and most devastating fire season ever experienced in New South Wales, Australia. The RFS's firefighting vehicles relied heavily on analogue radio, which often became overloaded during crises. Vital information like weather updates, maps and safety warnings had to be relayed by voice, slowing down decision-making. RFS needed a modern, interoperable system to instantly share situational data with crews on the ground, reserve radio channels for urgent traffic and support volunteer firefighters with better tools. Providing 24/7 reliability was paramount, as emergencies and bushfires can strike at any hour.

Fujitsu delivered an end-to-end digital emergency response platform for the RFS. At its core is a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, which manages the full lifecycle of incidents, from the initial emergency call to resource deployment and tracking. To connect frontline crews with this central system, Fujitsu then commenced rolling out rugged Panasonic Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) to 5,000 RFS vehicles. The MDTs (mounted tablet-like devices) use a specialised Fujitsu integration program and AWS Hosted Adashi Software from Versaterm to provide firefighters with a resilient two-way data link. Now incident commanders can send digital maps, satellite imagery, topographic information and the latest weather forecasts directly to crews in the field. Firefighters can update their status, receive turn-by-turn navigation, and even fill digital incident logs on the go.

A robust partnership

Critically, the new system is fully integrated and interoperable: the in-vehicle terminals interface in real time with the Fujitsu-managed CAD backend and other RFS systems, so that field updates and control-centre decisions are synchronised instantly. This interoperability extends to existing radio networks and GIS mapping tools, so that all channels of information work in concert. Fujitsu's solution also includes robust cloud infrastructure and cybersecurity for reliability, plus a dedicated support service.

"The CAD system has made our job easier," Rob Rogers Commissioner NSW Rural Fire Service explains. "It makes sure that we've got the closest, most suitable appliance coming to the job. And then the MDT gives us the information we need in the truck. That transfer of information means that everybody is better informed on the fireground and understands what their task is, what the risks are, and what the hazards and threats are that we're trying to deal with. Having that data available when people need it ultimately results in a safer community."

This instantaneous data transfer is a game-changer for keeping crews informed and safe in fast-moving bushfire conditions. Importantly, the new technology complements rather than replaces radio: by significantly reducing non-critical radio traffic, so that when a mayday or urgent call does come through, it's heard loud and clear.

Fujitsu's role goes beyond just installing hardware. As a long-term partner, Fujitsu provides robust project management, from customising the Adashi incident management software to suit RFS workflows, to overseeing installation in thousands of rural fire appliances (trucks) across diverse terrains. Fujitsu collaborated closely with RFS IT and field teams to test and refine the solution, so that the system is ideal for the purpose even in remote bushland with patchy connectivity. The CAD platform, managed by Fujitsu, ties into state emergency communication networks and RFS's existing systems, such as mapping databases and the Government Radio Network, for seamless interoperability.

Industry:
Public Safety

Location:
Australia

Website:
rfs.nsw.gov.au

About the customer

The NSW Rural Fire Service is the lead combat agency for bushfires in New South Wales and serves as the backbone of fire emergency response in rural communities. With nearly 71,000 volunteers organised into 2,000+ brigades the RFS provides fire prevention, education, mitigation and incident response across approximately 95% of the state.

Community impact and future outlook

RFS benefits from Fujitsu's provision of 24/7 proactive support and maintenance. System updates, cloud monitoring and a local support desk provide the CAD and vehicle terminals with near-zero downtime. Even during the height of bushfire season, RFS commanders and volunteers trust that their digital communications will perform reliably whenever duty calls. RFS personnel also benefit from Fujitsu's around-the-clock support desk, providing mission-critical systems that are operational during peak emergency periods.

"The Fujitsu team provide us with 24 hour support as part of our vendor arrangement. That's very important to us because once we run into issues either that we can't solve quick enough, were unaware of, or we need expert support, they're here to do what we need, to make sure that we can restore the issue and minimise that impact as quickly as possible," Matthew White, Manager Operational Platforms NSW RFS explains.

With climate change leading to longer and more intense fire seasons, the RFS's reliance on robust and innovative technology will only grow. Now, with Fujitsu's digital solution in place, the RFS is better equipped to safeguard New South Wales communities when emergencies and bushfires strike. Faster dispatch and richer field intelligence mean crews can contain fires more quickly, protecting lives, homes and wildlife. Improved tracking of trucks and personnel adds a layer of safety for the volunteers themselves as commanders can see crew locations in real time, which is crucial for accountability in dangerous and fast-changing firegrounds. During major emergencies, the system's resilience and Fujitsu's on-call support helps the RFS respond more effectively, even in 24/7 operations.

Customer:



Fujitsu

enquire@fujitsu.com

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