

THE AMERICAN RED CROSS STAYS ORGANIZED & IMPROVES COLLABORATION



San Diego/Imperial Counties

About: American Red Cross

The vision of the American Red Cross - San Diego/Imperial Counties is to become America's most prepared community. Founded in 1898, the organization serves to relieve human suffering by preventing, preparing for, and responding to emergencies. The Red Cross is not a governmental agency and relies on the community's donations of time and money to do its work.

www.sdark.org

Challenge: Organizing Projects Involving Multiple Parties

The San Diego/Imperial Counties Chapter of the Red Cross serves more than 3.25 million people covering over 9,000 square miles. It responds to a local emergency nearly every 24 hours, meaning it needs to be prepared for any disaster at any given time.

The organization's goal is to operate 21 emergency shelters independently and simultaneously, as well as to be able to feed 100,000 people every day. This goal is a huge undertaking that involves identifying sources of food, shelter and places to store materials. The organization uses Google Earth and Google Maps to identify and spatially display where the resources are. For example, one layer of the map identifies food sources with each pinpoint representing a restaurant that is willing to provide meals to those in need.

Researching and identifying resources, as well as filling out these maps with the appropriate information, is a manual and time-consuming task. To help with this project, the Red Cross enlisted the help of students at Palomar College in San Marcos, CA. The students were tasked with gathering demographic information to help build out the resource maps. However, the Red Cross needed a way to organize this project. The people involved with the project, including members of the Red Cross, the students at Palomar College and the professor, needed a platform for communicating with each other and tracking progress on the project.



"Central Desktop brought everything together. We were able to collaborate easier and save time by using the web meetings feature instead of having face-to-face meetings."

~Pat Lupica, Consultant

Solution: Central Desktop as a Project Management and File Sharing Solution

Mitch Hall, a volunteer for the Disaster Response department of the San Diego/Imperial Counties Chapter of the Red Cross, leads the organization's feeding efforts. To help manage the Palomar College students' work on gathering demographic data, Mitch worked with fellow Red Cross volunteer Pat Lupica, who is also a consultant and member of the Palomar College Finance & Administrative Services Planning Council. Pat was responsible for coordinating the students' work assembling valuable demographic data such as race and income. The Red Cross could then use this data to deduce which communities would likely use the Red Cross' facilities more, what dietary requests would be needed, and other information that is helpful for planning purposes.

Pat had previously used Central Desktop for a consulting project and knew that it was the right solution to manage this project. She organized a Central Desktop workspace that included herself, Red Cross workers, Palomar College students and their professor. Pat held a brief training session on Central Desktop for the group which allowed them to quickly get familiar with the software and begin using it very easily.

The group used Central Desktop's files and discussions feature to collaborate and finalize the project's Statement of Work, as well as save other relevant files. Having a central place to access these files was extremely convenient for the geographically dispersed group. Additionally, the group used Central Desktop's web meetings feature to hold virtual meetings to discuss the progress on the project, rather than meet in person. Coordinating in-person meetings between the group's individual schedules would have been difficult so being able to connect over the web was a big advantage of using Central Desktop's collaboration platform.

Using Central Desktop to manage the Red Cross' project helped the organization make significant headway toward its goal of being able to feed 100,000 people a day. The San Diego/Imperial Counties Chapter of the Red Cross is currently still in the process of building out the maps and identifying locations that will provide resources, and hopes to reach its goal within a few years.

Big Wins

- Centralized all files for easy access and convenience for the geographically dispersed group
- Saved time and resources by holding web meetings versus coordinating in-person meetings 25% increase in client retention
- Facilitated communication between project members