



SMARTSOURCE

EQUIPPING EMERGENCY COMMAND CENTERS



BACKGROUND

The National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) and US Forest Service collaborate to establish and operate temporary Emergency Command Centers (ECCs) near the highest-risk fires. These are often remote locations with little to no operational infrastructure, and they need to be up and running within 24 hours.

CHALLENGE

To properly equip remote ECCs with technology within 24 hours of an order.

The US Forest Service and NIFC rely on more than a dozen fire science software applications to assess a fire, predict its behavior, and devise suppression strategies that minimize danger to personnel and property. In addition, cloud-based software is often used at the ECC to process payroll, facilitate communications, and manage vendors.

These robust software applications require computer workstations, laptops, or iPads that are supported by printers, copiers, large display monitors, local area networking equipment, and servers to run optimally. However, the agency's own IT resources are limited and not at a level required to outfit ECCs during the wildfire season.

The NIFC and US Forest Service sought a reliable source of temporary computer and IT equipment that could meet the complex requirements of a government-funded operation. Requirements included:

- Custom hardware configuration and software preloaded to support fire science software and cloud-based software
- Scalable inventory ready at a moment's notice to ensure rapid fulfillment
- Specialized packaging to meet precise NIFC standards
- Immediate delivery to the ECC, no matter how remote, within 24 hours from when the order is placed

SOLUTION

The process begins each fall, when SmartSource provides NIFC with IT hardware to be loaded with the needed fire science software. The configured devices are then returned to one of SmartSource's nationwide facilities to be replicated and stored in anticipation of a call to service. When the devices are dispatched, they arrive pre-loaded, pre-configured, and ready for plug-and-play upon delivery. This saves hundreds of hours in IT labor.

Additionally, SmartSource established an internal protocol to process NIFC orders without delay, which includes a dedicated order line operating 24/7 year-round, a dedicated logistics expert to ensure delivery within the 24-hour window, a tailored fulfillment process designed to meet NIFC shipping requirements, a custom billing protocol that meets Federal A/R requirements, and a dedicated account manager who participates in regional and national wildfire planning meetings.

"Utilize existing technology that will enable Division Supervisors, Operations Section Chiefs, and Safety Officers to know in real time, 1) where the fire is, and 2) where the firefighters are. The Holy Grail of Firefighter Safety."

- Bill Gabbert
Retired wildland firefighter and publisher of
WildFireToday.com