

Toronto Fire Service Swaps Clipboards for Computers

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One of the biggest fire departments in North America and the biggest in Canada is exchanging their clipboards for computers in completing occupancy inspections. The solution TFS chose was developed by a Parksville software developer – One Step Systems.

Traditionally prevention officers inspected public and commercial buildings to insure they were compliant to fire code designed to protect building and their occupants from hazards that could cause fires. Violations were noted using clipboards, the file was then stored in a file cabinet and likely forgotten about. This system worked well when the structure used traditional building materials, did not contain exotic chemicals for manufacturing or had other hazards commonplace in modern industrial sites today. Inspecting a site and then storing the results in a dusty file does not meet the needs of modern fire suppression. By collecting occupancy information digitally departments are able to quickly determine the hazards and risks when a fire does occur.

More importantly the data can be queried to reveal trends or safety issues that need to be addressed as a community. Most of One Step's customers are in the US where household insurance is keyed to the rating of the community fire department. The rating of the fire department is keyed to how well they protect their community and prevention is an essential element in getting the best rating.

Many jurisdictions in the US and Canada struggle with how to keep their fire department well equipped and ready to handle the public safety tasks they are responsible for. When One Step is fully deployed for Toronto Fire Service, significant cost savings will be available as inspectors will be able to do more inspections in the same time with greater accuracy. This may not translate into staff reductions but it will at a minimum allow TFS flexibility in reassigning staff resources.

From One Step's perspective we are delighted to have been chosen. The agreement also includes a sales agreement with Intergraph Canada – a global integrator. An important part of the reason we were chosen is because of the number of US cities we are working with – it is odd that the US sites help to give a Canadian company credibility in providing software to a Canadian city. However it happened we are excited about the opportunity and see it is a stepping stone to other business in other large cities.