



SUMMARY



Customer

Nicholasville Fire Department
Nicholasville, Kentucky



Partner

L&W Technology Solutions

Industry

Government

Challenge

Replace outdated mobile data terminals with a rugged solution to allow first responders to communicate reliably and efficiently as well as leverage next-gen software applications.

Solution

- Zebra L10 Rugged Tablet
- Zebra L10 Vehicle Dock – Cradle
- Zebra L10 Rugged (IP65) Backlit Companion Keyboard

Results

- Increases reliability and durability of mobile platform
- Adds flexibility to firefighter data capture and streamlines reporting
- Better support for a variety of users by empowering first responders with a wider range of Android-based applications
- Modernized operations to increase firefighter safety through better communication and access to information

Zebra Tablets are ‘Firefighter-proof’ Solution for Nicholasville Fire Department

The Nicholasville Fire Department uses Zebra rugged tablets to support first responders with wide range of applications

First responders can’t leave anything to chance when facing a fire or medical emergency. When out on a call, access to streamlined, efficient communication helps saves lives.

Nicholasville is one of the fastest growing cities in Kentucky, with more than 30,000 people across 13 square miles of homes, businesses and farms served by 58 firefighters at four stations. That’s a relatively big city for four stations to cover, so getting the most accurate information quickly and reliably is a challenge.

When the Nicholasville Fire Department decided to update the mobile data terminals on its trucks, it needed a dependable, modern solution. Its laptops were outdated, its operating system didn’t support current applications, and the technology didn’t have the flexibility or reliability to grow capabilities. This includes adding Android-based responder solutions that are quickly becoming the new standard.

The department needed a solution that met these needs but was also mobile and durable. “When firemen have something in their hands, it has to be bullet-proof,” says Lt. Brian Jenkins of the Nicholasville Fire Department. “We’re good at torture-testing new equipment, whether we intend to or not, and we wanted to know the next solution was going to last inside a fire truck with everyday use.”

Nicholasville Fire Department’s search for a new solution began and ended while visiting L&W Technology Solutions. This Zebra partner creates custom solutions using mobile data terminals (MDTs) for a number of fire departments, police departments, emergency medical vehicle operators, and other first responders in the region. By reviewing the fire department’s robust list of requirements and squaring them with best practices and industry trends, L&W Technology Solutions found a solution that would be mobile, versatile and resistant to the most demanding environments.

A Multitude of Applications

L&W Technology Solutions equipped the Nicholasville Fire Department with Zebra Technologies' L10 rugged tablets with L10 vehicle docks and rugged IP65 backlit companion keyboards. The tablets can support a wide variety of use cases for first responders in the field, including navigation, HAZMAT management, incident reporting, task management and backup communications if radios go down.

Zebra tablets and accessories deliver a robust, yet cost-effective solution that allows Nicholasville first responders to connect to applications from anywhere in the field or at the firehouse. The Zebra solution is scalable and supports a variety of current and future use cases – whether the operator is a firefighter, emergency medical technician, fire marshal or chief – all from a single platform.

When called to a medical emergency, first responders can immediately start collecting information on the tablet. The built-in camera allows them to take pictures and transfer them to their software for data collection and pre-incident planning. At an automobile accident, instead of writing down license plates, vehicle identification numbers and driver's license numbers, the responder can take photos and save them.

During inspections, fire marshals can use the devices to photograph violations instead of using a clipboard and camera, making creating reports faster and easier. The Android operating system (OS) is also intuitive and comfortable for operators who are accustomed to laptops and different OS.

"Zebra tablets offer us a single platform to do virtually everything we need to do while in the field," says Jenkins. "From getting directions to an emergency and responding to our call management system to building detailed reports and helping us communicate with other first responders, it really does it all."

Zebra tablets can deliver a variety of industry standard applications that are essential to the department's work. For example, StreetWise CADLink simplifies fire and EMS reporting and records management. When a unit is dispatched, it maps out the route to the incident site and offers turn-by-turn navigation at a touch of the screen.

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Emergency Reporting is software which enables Nicholasville to enter all of its incidents for the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NIFRS). This is useful for insurance claims as well as investigations. Additionally, it inventories all the equipment throughout the department, and it maintains a calendar of events and roll calls.

The tablets also have Zello, a push-to-talk app that uses mobile/LTE to function similar to a walkie-talkie. “Having redundant communications is critical because, when lives are on the line, we need a backup plan for everything,” says Jenkins. “If our repeater system for our main radio system goes down, we can fall back on Zello and our Zebra tablets to communicate.”

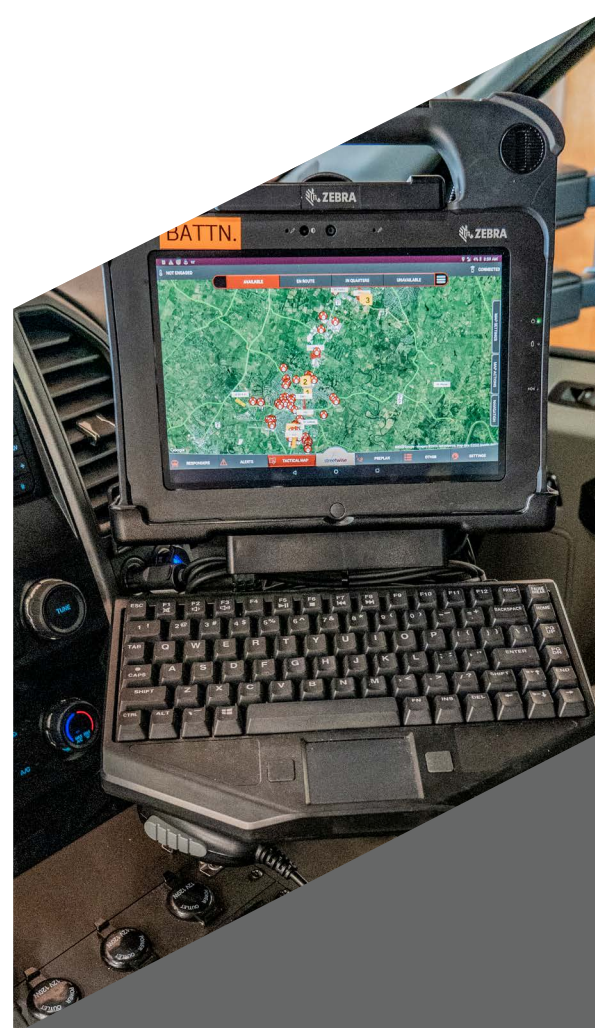
Firefighters can also access Wisier via the tablets, a HAZMAT research system that provides a wide range of information to first responders. For example, if there’s a tanker truck on the highway, Wisier will tell the individual exactly what the truck is hauling, enabling firefighters to take the steps necessary to keep both first responders and the community safe.

Saving Lives and Headaches

Deploying the Zebra solution across all of the department’s roles and vehicles was also simple and didn’t require the use of protective cases for its new equipment. By comparison, other devices Nicholasville tested didn’t achieve the same degree of toughness even with protective cases. The Zebra tablets also charge in docking stations wirelessly, so there is no wear and tear on charging contact points, adding to its overall durability.

“Zebra tablets are tough,” says Jenkins. “We need them to take a jolt, a drop, or whatever – because we can’t afford a tablet to break if we drop it.” Jenkins adds that, since adopting the rugged technology, none of the “firefighter-proof” devices have needed to be replaced.

The relationship between the Nicholasville Fire Department and L&W Technology Solutions has also strengthened. The partner’s recommendation of Zebra solutions and help with setup and ongoing support demonstrates its commitment to quality customer service. Jenkins says the company’s broad experience with government contracts has also given the team support in handling purchase orders, strict budgets and taxpayer money.



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Future of Firefighting

As Nicholasville grows, its fire department is constantly looking for ways to streamline efficiency of communication, and the Zebra tablets are meeting the challenge while sustaining the everyday, round-the-clock stress of responding to emergency calls.

The Zebra tablets are becoming essential for dispatching units in Nicholasville, where new subdivisions are being built faster than the streets can be named. The tablets direct emergency vehicles to any location quickly and reliably, when seconds count.

“Zebra tablets are a really great solution for us from a usability standpoint,” says Jenkins. “As someone who has never used an Android-based product, it’s been an easy transition. It was easy for me to learn, and I’m not the ‘technology guy’ on our team. This inspired us to install additional Zebra tablets in our command vehicles and added new use cases.”

Most importantly, Zebra tablets will help the Nicholasville Fire Department answer the needs of a growing city. This scalable, versatile solution will help protect residents, homes and businesses, as well as fire department personnel.



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