



## Case Study

# Federal Aviation Administration



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### ROI

Enables agency to allocate personnel and resources more efficiently following hurricanes; speeds hurricane response by putting all the necessary information at agency staff's fingertips; helps technical staff understand the nature of the hurricane damage in order to quickly develop a strategic response.

### Company Profile

The Federal Aviation Administration's National Field Incident Response consists of a rapid-response team that assembles during hurricane season to assess and repair damage to the airports and air-traffic management systems that the FAA oversees and maintains.

### Challenge

To keep track of a mountain of information about hurricane damage and allocate disaster-relief personnel and resources most effectively.

## Information Management/Disaster-relief management

### A hurricane-response unit uses MindManager to quickly get damaged commercial airports up and running

When Hurricane Jeanne ripped through Florida and the southeastern U.S. in September 2004, it left behind \$6.9 billion in damage. Across the Southern region, the Federal Aviation Administration's rapid-response team fanned out to assess and repair the destruction to airports and air-traffic management systems. Their mission: To get airports quickly back in service both for the sake of commercial travel and to get federal emergency-response teams where they were most needed. The FAA began using MindManager, even as a major hurricane was raging, to help develop a clear picture of the situation on the ground.

"We look at hurricanes—plan for them, prepare for them—then as things start happening we need to build the best picture we can," says Alan Stensland, the Eastern Service Area manager who leads the FAA's hurricane-response team.

### Organizing the response

"We have a facility in Pensacola, Florida, where most of the houses were destroyed in Hurricane Jeanne," says James Deck, a national air space specialist who developed the MindManager system that the team used during last year's hurricane season. "The first thing we needed to do was make sure our personnel were all right."

Deck used the software to create visual information maps to show where personnel were at all times. "As calls would come in, I would put down where they were going, as they were going there," he says. "It became a live database of where everyone was and what they were doing."

Deck entered each team leader as a branch of the map, which then showed all the team members under them and each person's location and phone numbers. "It became a document we used moment by moment in the middle of the hurricane to track the well-being of hundreds of FAA personnel," he says.

### Bringing information to life

Deck began to chart the entire operation on the rapidly expanding map, tracking everything from response teams to airport conditions, and organizing information according to such categories as geographic area and type of equipment damaged. He used the interface's graphical features to color-code facilities, adding yellow flags next to the names of damaged airports and red flags for those that were completely out-of-service.

"When you have thousands of facilities and thousands of people you end up with a lot of information, and it gets very hard to manage it all," he says. By capturing all of this information in the map interface, the team could easily see the damage assessment and repair status of every facility, and quickly zero in on the information they needed to take action. "Having everything at your fingertips makes it so much easier when you give a briefing—to have all the information in front of you rather than having to go through a whole book with tabs sticking out," says Deck. "You have quick access to as much detail as you want, instead of it being all over the place."

### Improving processes

Stensland's group has tried all kinds of new technologies and systems for organizing information, including Web sites, instant messaging, and wireless data devices. "We use a lot of products to help us make superior decisions and to get the right assets to the right place at the right time," Stensland says. "We had tried to do a few things with spreadsheets, but it didn't really work for us. Generally we didn't have a way to put things up in a visual way, and then be able to move them around, and then see the links and the commonalities."

## Solution

The FAA uses MindManager to create maps showing the extent of the hurricane damage to the airports it manages and the personnel who are on the scene to fix it.

## Product

Mindjet MindManager

## Result

The team can quickly and efficiently deliver the right resources to the right place, and learn from its experiences to better deal with future disasters.

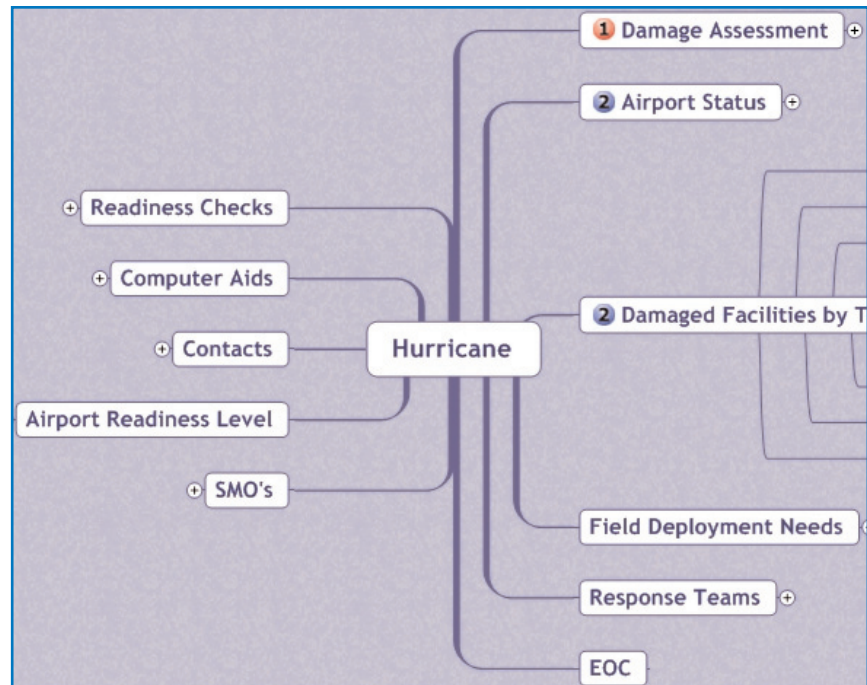
Deck says that it was unusual for the team to have adopted a new technology so quickly. “There was almost no training time necessary to learn how to create the maps—this is one of the best things about it,” says Deck. “We downloaded the trial copy, and in 30 to 40 minutes we were able to start making things that were useful to us.”

Deck is now analyzing the data he gathered last year to help manage the agency's response to this year's hurricane season. “Before, we never had any way of tracking things—it was ad hoc, and we responded as it happened,” he says. “This was the first time we created a really good record of how everything unfolded.”

## Increasing efficiency

Stensland also likes the fact that he can quickly communicate a complex situation to highly technical people who are more comfortable with charts and graphs than with long text documents. “The map format gives us visual acuity—the ability to lay things out where people can quickly look at them and say, ‘There is what we need to focus on,’ and then figure out how to deal with it,” he says. “With the highly technical workforce of engineers and technicians that I have, they love to jump in and solve problems. They'll take a low-priority site and start working on that problem. It helps me to manage their work better if I can show them the same graphic I am looking at and get them to see that something else is a higher priority area.”

And this kind of strategic thinking yields bottom-line results. “We know that we are doing things so much more efficiently now,” he says. “We burn through \$15,000 to \$20,000 a day, so it makes a big difference if we are able to manage [personnel] efficiently. We have sites strung out all over the place with varying needs. Anything we can do to get the sites repaired as quickly as possible is a benefit—and visual mapping does that.”



Managing hurricane-damage response with Mindjet MindManager

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