OPTIMIZED OPERATIONS FOR A SAFE OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE

OVERVIEW

The Monmouth County fair in Freehold, New Jersey takes place in July, over 5 days, and welcomed 75,000 visitors in 2016.

CHALLENGES

The Fair is completely outdoors and there are no shelters on the premises other than tents, so when severe weather approaches, operations must coordinate seamless evacuations to ensure safety.

SOLUTION

Earth Networks meteorological services and web visualization tool equip officials at the Monmouth County Fair with the severe weather intelligence they need to make critical operations decisions.

RESULTS

Officials have the resources necessary for quick decision making and were able to evacuate all guests from the grounds safely during severe weather events and they continue to utilize Earth Networks solutions to ensure safety during a variety of other outdoor activities.
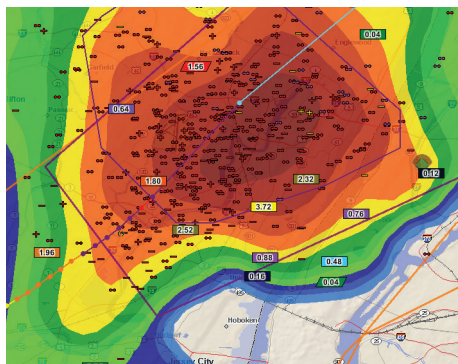
EARTH NETWORKS HELPS MONMOUTH COUNTY, NJ ENSURE SAFETY DURING ANNUAL OUTDOOR FAIR

Every July, the Monmouth County Fair in Freehold, New Jersey opens for five days to welcome 75,000 visitors. Outdoor activities include an opening night fireworks display, an active carnival midway with rides and games, stages featuring live bands and performances and an extensive agricultural fair with 4-H events and exhibits.

KEEPING THOUSANDS SAFE OUTDOORS

Held entirely outdoors, the fair creates a unique series of challenges for officials. "Because the fair is all under tents, there is no place for people to shelter during bad weather," explains Andrew Spears of the Monmouth County Park System. When severe weather approaches,

officials need to cancel the fair and evacuate all visitors and staff – a process that can take up to an hour. Having the lead times needed to effectively clear the fairgrounds is crucial. Like many public administrators, Monmouth County officials proactively reevaluated their emergency operations and response plan in the aftermath of the tragic 2011 Indiana State Fair stage collapse due to sudden high winds that killed five and injured dozens. "We knew that thunderstorms were typical for us in July, and we knew we needed to be decisive and move forward quickly, because waiting is not the best option," says Spears.

AN AUTOMATED TURNKEY SAFETY SOLUTION FOR A LARGE SCALE OUTDOOR EVENT

Monmouth County selected Earth Networks, operator of the largest weather monitoring and lightning detection networks, to provide a comprehensive suite of weather sensors and tools to help them manage outdoor weather safety and preparedness at the event. The solution included:

• **Meteorological Support Services:** Earth Networks' professional meteorologists were available to county officials by phone 24/7 to provide breaking updates on changing weather and forecasts for specific, local areas.

• **Web-based Weather Visualization and Alerting Application:** Designed to monitor storm cells, lightning and changing conditions, that combines real-time data from neighborhood-level stations from more than 35,000 locations – including over 12,000 stations that are exclusive to Earth Networks.

WHY IT MATTERS

The Monmouth County fair experienced a very challenging week of weather with multiple rounds of thunderstorms. Fortunately, the emergency response plan for severe weather was in place, and officials had the resources necessary for quick decision making. "Having live access to a meteorologist allowed us to get very detailed, site-specific information about how the impending storms might affect us, while the web visualization tool proved to be extremely reliable and provided real-time data on thunderstorm movement, lightning, wind gusts, and weather watches and warnings," says Spears. "We made the decision, based on the visualization data and consultation from Earth Networks' meteorologists, to close the fair on two occasions due to approaching thunderstorms. We made the right call both times and evacuated all guests from the grounds in a timely fashion." The county continues to utilize the visualization tool for ongoing weather monitoring to ensure safety during a variety of other outdoor activities, including its summer camps, nature and boating programs, and recreational locations, including an oceanfront beach.

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