TAMING A MOUNTAIN WITH LOCATION-BASED TECHNOLOGY

Industry
- Tourism

Region
- North America

Solution
- BlackBerry® 10 smartphones

Located between the Coast Mountains and the Canadian Rockies, the Silver Star Mountain Resort (Silver Star) is a prime destination for winter sports. Thousands of skiers and snowboarders come to Silver Star every winter to take advantage of snowfall of more than 700 cm of dry powder annually.

The Challenge
Silver Star works hard to make sure all its visitors have a good time — and a safe time. That's why they have a trained team of first-responders, dedicated to ensuring that when visitors need help, they can get it quickly.

Silver Star's patrol staff has a daunting job: responding to emergencies over 1,900 acres, which includes challenging trails, trees and gullies. If visitors need aid, these patrol staff need to find them quickly and provide help, no matter where they are located.

There is an average of 17 patrol staff on duty, seven days a week. They are coordinated and dispatched by a nearby medical clinic that operates over 100 hours a week.

Patrol staff attends to over 800 Code 2 and 3 calls per season, which range from non-life threating injuries like a broken wrist to life-threatening emergencies with unresponsive patients. They can attend to as many as 18 calls per day.

When a visitor has an accident, getting the closest patrol staff to a visitor in need quickly can make a huge difference in outcomes. Yet, the mountain represents a challenging terrain to coordinate teams, with limited cell coverage over a significant part of the site.

The Solution
Over its most recent season, Silver Star piloted a program that gave its patrol staff BlackBerry 10 devices loaded with an app — Safety Link —created by AbsoluteTrac, a company specializing in customized telematics solutions. Coupled with associated WebTrac software used by dispatchers, this system provides the locations of all patrol staff, updated every 15 seconds.

"The BlackBerry Q5 device was chosen, as only BlackBerry devices could be configured to push the GPS positioning the short increments required for accurate location tracking in time-sensitive emergency situations," explained Phil Gaudette, Deputy Patrol Director, Silver Star Ski Resort.

Patrol staff simply sign on to their BlackBerry® Q5 smartphone at the beginning of their shift and the device and software do the rest. Dispatchers not only know where patrol staff are, they can also see where they are moving and how quickly.
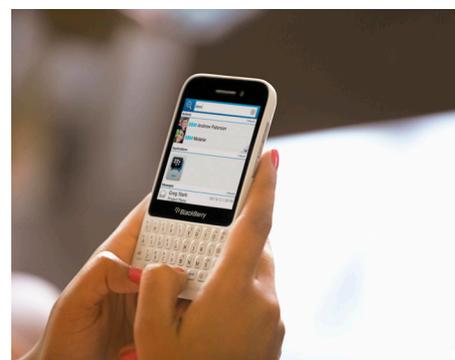
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Phil Gaudette
Deputy Patrol Director
Silver Star Ski Resort

Taming the Mountain

For Silver Star, the pilot program demonstrated the power of location-based technologies to improve emergency effectiveness.

"We've seen a significant improvement in our ability to get help to people who need it faster," said Gaudette. "In many situations, the location of someone who needs help isn't clear. Terrain can get in the way and weather is often a factor. With this system, we could guide backup help right to the scene, based the GPS coordinates of the first responder on the scene."

A factor in the success was the BlackBerry Q5 devices.

According to Gaudette, "BlackBerry creates tough hardware — despite lots of knocks and a harsh environment, none failed. They were easy for patrol staff to use, even under emergency situations."

With a successful pilot behind them, Silver Star is looking to expand the program to include additional staff, including groomer operators and trail crew. "The ability to coordinate staff across our entire property has the potential to significantly increase efficiency and reduce costs," explained Gaudette.

Key Benefits

- Reliable, rugged hardware

- Easy-to-use interface

- Capable of being configured for accurate, location-based services

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