Charleston County News Release

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See Pictometry examples: **http://www.charlestoncounty.org/newsimages/psb.htm**

Charleston County Equips 911 Call Centers with Pictometry

Pictometry imaging provides critical tool for 911 dispatchers and emergency responders

Charleston County Government is implementing software that will help County workers more effectively respond to emergencies.

While software mapping is still the primary tool to show directions to an incident, the County is now using a new tool called Pictometry to do the job. Pictometry allows dispatchers to view an actual photo image of the buildings and surrounding area where an emergency responder is being sent.

"For years, 911 dispatchers have used paper maps and mapping software to assist EMS, fire and law enforcement personnel get to a location in a timely manner. But we are constantly looking for new technological advancements, and we are excited to now have Pictometry, which is a major enhancement for our County in providing specific location information during an emergency," said William Tunick, Charleston County Telecommunications and 911 Systems Director.

Now, the image of the building or area where a 911 call originates comes up automatically on the dispatcher's computer screen as soon as a call comes into the dispatch center.

"At any point during a call, dispatchers viewing the Pictometry images can tell emergency responders about a building's size, the type of intersection to look for, or obstacles they may face," Tunick said. "Pictometry allows the 911 dispatcher to view an incident scene from the north, south, east, west and directly above, to provide a 360-degree view of any area within Charleston County."

A pilot test of the Pictometry tool is currently being run with Charleston County Sheriff's Office and the EMS 911 call centers. Upon successful completion of this testing, the five Primary Public Safety Answering Points (known as PSAPs), where 911 calls are answered within the County, will begin having the Pictometry tool installed.

Pictometry also provides dispatchers with tools that allow them to measure distance, area and height of structures within the image. Dispatchers are now able to provide the distance of a road not easily seen by the responders on the ground or at night. They can determine the height of a building for fire fighting purposes or the original square footage of a structure damaged by a natural event.

The new tools allow the dispatchers to be able to keep a record of ongoing, long-term events, such as a hazardous materials spill.

"Like a white board, dispatchers are able to draw and erase on the image to annotate where a specific scene is, use icons to represent what responding units are on scene, and mark areas of concern or interest for first responders on the ground," Tunick said. "This is a valuable learning tool because all images, along with any annotations, are printable for future reference."
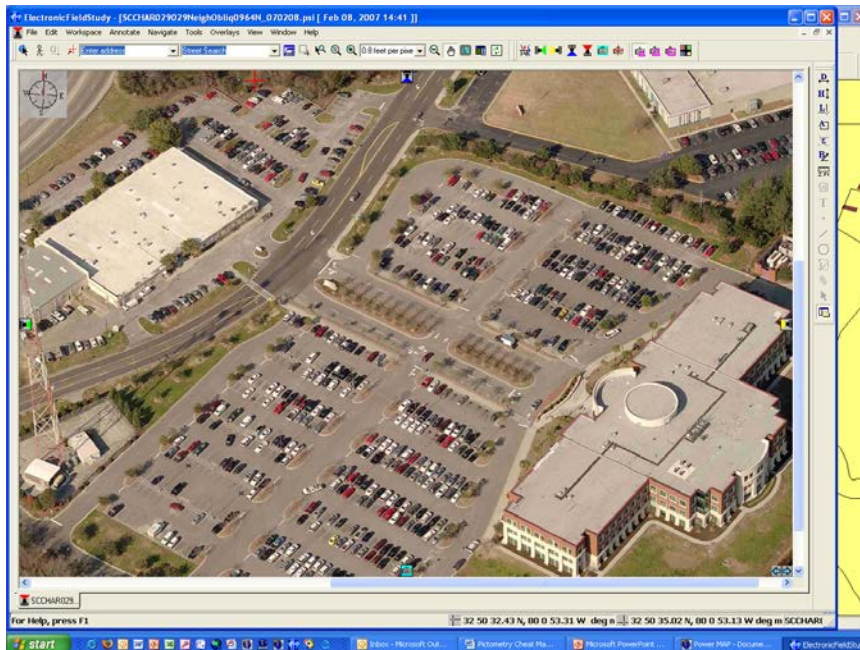
Pictometry images are derived from high resolution cameras flown on aircraft specifically designed to assist the mapping industry on a worldwide basis. The current images that are being used in the dispatch centers for Charleston County are from February and March of 2007.

"Charleston County, in cooperation with local municipalities, is planning for new images to be produced in 2009 and 2010, so dispatchers will be able to see up-to-date images," Tunick said.

Visit the Charleston County Web site at www.charlestoncounty.org for news, services and up-to-date information relating to Charleston County Government.

Directional Views of the County Public Services Building using Pictometry:

From the South

From the North