

Case Study: Tonkin & Taylor

Tonkin & Taylor uses SharePlus to respond to devastating natural disaster in New Zealand

“There is nothing like SharePlus on the market. This application is deceptively powerful, stable and easy to use... If you are using SharePoint without using SharePlus you are missing out on a world of possibilities.”

Ian Billington ICS engineer at Tonkin + Taylor



The Client

Tonkin + Taylor is a leading New Zealand Environmental and Engineering Consultancy, with offices in Australia, Malaysia and the wider Asia Pacific region. With over 50 years of experience in the industry, the company provides a variety of services in civil, environmental and geotechnical engineering, water resources planning and development and data solutions.

The Challenge

The Canterbury region of New Zealand suffered a series of devastating earthquakes from 2010-2011. On September 4, 2010, the first earthquake hit Christchurch, the largest city on New Zealand's South Island. The magnitude 7.1 earthquake caused significant damage for the city and surrounding region. Fortunately, there were no direct fatalities. Disaster struck Christchurch again on Tuesday, February 22, 2011. A magnitude 6.3 earthquake, with an epicenter only 10 kilometers outside of the city, severely damaged many buildings and landmarks. With a death toll of 181, it was the second deadliest natural disaster recorded in New Zealand's history. New Zealand's government quickly organized an emergency management structure to deal with rescue operations, and for the first time ever, declared a National State of Emergency. The response was quick and well organized. All government agencies were involved in the rescue operations. Already vulnerable from two large earthquakes, Christchurch was rocked again by a large aftershock on June, 13 2011.

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While this resulted in more building damage, no additional lives were lost. Rattled by three large earthquakes in the short span of nine months, New Zealanders were anxious to begin recovery.

Tonkin + Taylor was brought in to survey the damage done and make recommendations regarding land no longer suitable for residential occupation. Relying on SharePoint for most of their work, land damage assessment in remote areas with no access to electricity or communications was going to be a challenging task.

The Solution

Facing an emergency scenario, Tonkin + Taylor began researching potential solutions. They considered the possibility of gathering all data using offline iPads and iPhones on the field, and later processing it back at their headquarters. They contacted SouthLabs (now part of Infragistics), creators of the mobile SharePoint app, SharePlus, for assistance. With SharePlus installed on their devices, Tonkin + Taylor was able to map both area-wide and individual property damage, and meet the high priority research needs of the New Zealand government. "When we hit a limitation to the app, we contacted SouthLabs to provide custom features. They were very quick at understanding what we needed and coding it up for us," said Iain Billington, ICS Engineer at Tonkin + Taylor. "They handled all the complexities, delivered a file we could easily distribute to our fleet of iPads, and kept us up to date as new versions were released."



The Client's Benefit

Today, Tonkin + Taylor's effort continues, and the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority publishes the results of their work on their website in order to help property owners determine the status of their land. "Tonkin + Taylor's work is an essential resource on the road to recovery from the disaster, and we are proud of being able to help," said Gabriel Lopez, former co-founder and CEO of SouthLabs and current Product Lead at Infragistics. The 2011 Christchurch Earthquake was a major catastrophe, and the costliest natural disaster (with an estimated rebuilding cost of around NZ\$20-30 billion) in New Zealand's history. The silver lining of such a tragedy can be found in the quick and efficient response by the New Zealand government and Tonkin + Taylor's research.

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