

Lake County Emergency Management Agency Relies on Zebra Printer for Employee, Volunteer Badges

Printing Cards on Site and on Demand Gives Indiana Agency Tighter Control over Homeland Security-Related Duties

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The mission of the Lake County Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (EMA) is to provide a comprehensive approach to managing emergencies and disasters within the county by providing clear direction in activities that enable it to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from situations that threaten the lives of Lake County, Indiana residents, their homes, and their communities. Lake County covers about 501 square miles, with a population of roughly 487,000 people. The County has 11 townships, and its largest cities are Gary (population of 102,746) and Hammond (population of 83,048).

The county's Emergency Management Agency expanded its duties to include homeland security, and is now charged with responding to not only extreme natural disasters and evacuations, but terrorist-sponsored emergencies as well.

In order to make sure that only authorized individuals responded to such events, the agency decided to print photo identification cards for its four employees and approximately 70 volunteers. For heightened security, the agency chose to print the cards itself, on site, so that it could add confidential security features to the cards.

Lake County EMA chose the Zebra P330i, a single-sided, full-color printer, to create the bar code encoded identification cards.

"In general, the cards are used to prove to a first responder that a volunteer arriving on the scene is legitimate, that he is who he says he is," reports Rick Terpstra, who coordinates communications for the homeland security agency and the Community Emergency Response Team.

An encoded barcode that is read by a portable reader used on site at emergencies by the Lake County EMA ensures that only authorized individuals report to the scene of a disaster.

"We print on both sides of the card, with a photo, the name of the agency, the Indiana Department of Homeland security logo, and the person's name and position on the front. The back contains the barcode, the person's photo again, and a place for notes regarding the clearances permitted by the code on the barcode," Terpstra adds.

The agency uses the Zebra printer one to two times per week to print cards for new volunteers, or to replace lost or damaged cards. Terpstra and one other employee print all the cards.

"I have found the printer easy to use, and very reliable. I haven't had a problem with it whatsoever since we started using it about eight or nine months ago," he noted.

The agency has changed its name a few times, causing Terpstra to change the cards. But he is

able to quickly and easily redesign the cards with the new name.

"We didn't use cards at all before this, and I am very happy with our card identification program and the Zebra card printer," Terpstra declared.