

FE/Kimball Maps Out New Addresses for 30,000 Structures in Blair County, Pa.



THE SITUATION

Except for the city of Altoona, Blair County is a largely rural, 527-square-mile area in central Pennsylvania. When the county launched an effort in the mid-1990s to adopt Enhanced 9-1-1 service, one of the first tasks was to re-address all 24 townships and boroughs within its boundaries.

- Most houses and businesses in the area used rural route box numbers as their address. When residents called 9-1-1, they would need to describe or provide directions to their location.
- The new 9-1-1 system required that a street address be used to identify the locations of landline phones. Those addresses would be displayed automatically in the dispatch center when an emergency call came in.

The goal of the re-addressing effort was to ensure that all 30,000 structures in the county were assigned a 9-1-1-style street address that fit standards created by the National Emergency Number Association. With only 10,000 locations having 9-1-1- street addresses, the county needed to produce addresses for three-quarters of all the structures.

THE CHALLENGES

The re-addressing project required inventorying and mapping all the homes, businesses, streets and farms in the county and then creating street numbers for the structures, as well as street names where necessary. For more than 10 years, four contractors had failed to deliver what the county needed to accomplish with this project. County officials sought a company with expertise that could yield targeted results in carrying out all the steps necessary to re-address Blair County communities.

THE SOLUTION

Blair County commissioners were familiar with the diverse range of services that FE/Kimball had provided its agencies over the years and contacted the firm to carry out the mapping and re-addressing project.

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Project Overview

CLIENT
Blair County, Pennsylvania

GOAL
Re-address 30,000 structures in a Central Pennsylvania community so that emergency response times could be reduced and the 9-1-1 center could prepare for Next Generation 9-1-1; convert paper maps to digital parcel data; implement better 9-1-1 data tools

- FE/Kimball SERVICES**
- Data collection
 - Re-addressing
 - Digital parcel mapping
 - Standalone ALI database design and implementation
 - GIS mapping system implementation



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FE/Kimball began by gathering the partial information that had been collected by previous contractors and then determining the information that yet had to be gathered. FE/Kimball contracted with Mobile Video of Kansas City, MO to execute the field work under project management guidelines developed by FE/Kimball mapping experts.

- Crews visited every structure in the county, gathering the address and phone number to be associated with each.
- FE/Kimball compiled this information in digital form.
- FE/Kimball combined the new information with data from the initial contractors and assigned a 9-1-1-style address to each building.
- From this data, FE/Kimball supplied each municipal board or council a set of plots that showed all the new addresses and street names, with recommendations for changes to duplicate street names and requests to identify unnamed streets.
- With input from the municipal authorities, L.R. Kimball completed the re-addressing task and then began furnishing the post office with the list of new streets and addresses across the county that needed to be entered into its database.

Mapping the Parcels

In association with the re-addressing project, FE/Kimball acquired paper maps of the county from the assessment office and scanned them to make a digital overlay. The digital maps were placed over aerial photography of the area to align with the boundaries of roads and fields. FE/Kimball then digitized the parcel lines and added text from the paper maps.

To complete the project, the firm transformed the maps into one county-wide, seamless digital layer showing all the land parcels. The map layer was delivered to the county assessment office, office staff were trained so that the map could be updated when new deeds were filed.

The map also provided 9-1-1 dispatchers with parcel data as a reference source for calls from mobile phones that might originate from hunters, fishermen and other transitory groups in the most remote parts of the county.

Tools to Manage 9-1-1 Data

As a subsequent project, Blair County again called on FE/Kimball to implement a standalone automatic location identification (ALI) database that allows the County to manage its own 9-1-1 telephone database records. The firm installed the database management system that now enables county employees to make corrections to name, address and/or phone number information in the 9-1-1 database. It also allows staff to validate daily telephone record updates from the phone companies and make immediate corrections to ensure each record is 9-1-1 valid.

Additionally, FE/Kimball designed and implemented a GIS mapping system with the 9-1-1 center to show 9-1-1 call locations. This was accomplished using the GIS data provided through this project that is being updated and maintained on a regular basis by county staff.

THE RESULTS

FE/Kimball played a key role in Blair County's efforts to modernize its 9-1-1 system.

- The re-addressing project has reduced response time for 9-1-1 personnel by equipping them with data that enables the dispatch of first responders more quickly than before.
- Dispatchers no longer have to ask callers to identify their locations, speeding the response process.
- Dispatchers know where their own resources are located in the field and are able to make quicker and more informed decisions.
- The parcel-mapping effort provided dispatchers with additional capabilities for locating mobile callers and helped modernize the county assessment office's operation.
- By providing the county with 9-1-1 data management tools, FE/Kimball helped make the emergency database more accurate.
- The data and systems implemented for this project position the county well for Next Generation 9-1-1 technology which is evolving across the nation.

FE/Kimball demonstrated again that expertise counts when counties seek partners to help them upgrade their public services.

