

When storms and other natural disasters hit, StormCenter's GeoCollaborate™ is designed to enhance communication and planning, enabling real-time data interoperability across platforms used by emergency personnel.

STORMCENTER COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

Weather events and natural and technological disasters are garnering more and more media attention as their effects create increasing costs to the economy and to human life. During a natural disaster working together can be a matter of life or death, and communication and planning are often cited as areas needing to be improved upon to deal with these events more effectively.

PHASE III SUCCESS

NOAA awarded StormCenter a 5-year indefinite delivery indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contract

AGENCIES

NOAA, NASA

SNAPSHOT

Headquartered in Maryland, StormCenter Communications, Inc. has developed GeoCollaborate™, a patent-pending tactical collaborative geospatial intelligence solution with a growing network of users including NOAA, the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), and many more.

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StormCenter Communications' line of products, GeoCollaborate™, described by the company as Twitter for maps, is designed to be added to digital maps and matured infrastructures that already exist and enables real time data interoperability across the platforms used by emergency managers and other key stakeholders. Rafael Ameller, CTO at StormCenter, stated that the technology is not only focused on incremental advances to the map and GIS technologies in place today; it also revolutionizes how humans interact with maps, data and people at the same time.

In 2010, a Phase I SBIR award provided R&D funding for early stage, high-risk technology development based on emerging map and GIS technologies that allow for big data analysis on interactive maps. As a result of work by Rafael Ameller who is responsible for the company's SBIR efforts StormCenter was able to develop GeoCollaborate™ a patent-pending tactical collaborative geospatial intelligence solution. The company's strategy for success centers on working with a variety of partners and cultivating relationships before, during, and after receiving contracts and taking advantage of opportunities within the company's home state of Maryland – the company was named Maryland's Best for Cyber and Homeland Security Geospatial Innovations in 2012. "We learned agility through our agency work, and we learned the dynamics of different industries to keep our products relevant," said Mr. Ameller.

Phases I, II and II-E NASA and Phase III NOAA SBIR funding has allowed StormCenter to continue to add strategic talent to support its growth and innovations long-term - since receiving its first SBIR award, the company has doubled its staff. StormCenter is now in Phase III of the NOAA SBIR program, which allows federal agencies to contract for work in several areas on a sole-source basis with no further justification or approval required. These areas include cross-platform virtual globe collaboration; visualization of earth science data using 3-D virtual globes; real-time collaboration using geobrowsers (map viewers); and innovation, training, and support related to any of these topics. The company sees a broad

spectrum of applications for GeoCollaborate™ in fields as diverse as homeland security, emergency management, weather forecasting, transportation, energy management, and education.

In reflecting on their success with the SBIR program, Mr. Ameller describes it as “a government contract with training wheels.” The SBIR program teaches small businesses how to navigate the waters of government proposals and contracts, which enables them to take businesses to the next level using this knowledge. In addition to learning how to successfully fulfill contracts and prepare effective proposals, StormCenter credits the program with the opportunity to work with new agencies and cultivate meaningful relationships. Prior to receiving its SBIR awards the company had been focused solely on research grants, which are very different from government contracts. The knowledge and experience gained through their work with the SBIR program helped StormCenter to secure a major contract - in 2013, NOAA awarded StormCenter a 5-year indefinite delivery indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contract. As part of this contract an initial task order for a proof-of-concept project was begun to allow the National Weather Service (NWS) Sterling, VA Weather Forecast Office to collaborate with the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) operations center while each used its own mapping platform. In 2014, StormCenter contracted with the United Kingdom’s Meteorological Office (in Essex, England) for a similar demonstrator employing the Met Office’s Hazard Manager.

By making mapping platforms more relevant and usable, not only is the company benefitting from having a competitive edge against larger well-established forms, strong industry players such as Northrop Grumman are partnering with StormCenter for future efforts. Presently, StormCenter is hoping to elevate its product for other agencies through Phase IIIs to bring in even more innovation. In addition to expanding agency work, the company is hoping to branch out and work with commercial weather vendors and other industrial sectors. StormCenter sees growth potential in a variety of industries including oil and gas, which is heavily dependent on accurate and collaborative mapping tools. The ability to provide interoperability among platforms without subjecting users to equipment upgrades or learning a new system is a critical component of StormCenter’s success. The company’s flexible and cost-saving technology and its ability to work well with a variety of agencies providing tailored solutions provides near limitless potential for this technology.

Subject Matter Expert Creates and Delivers Model Forecast to Public Safety Stakeholder Showing Toxic Airborne Particles Released from a Train Derailment in Baltimore City

Subject Matter Expert App

Public Safety Stakeholder App

Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center
Hospital Status: OPEN
Burn Center: Open

...the plume model appears in public safety stakeholder’s applications where it can be paired with real-time stakeholder data to identify vulnerabilities and improve situational awareness.

A subject matter expert uses an expert modeling tool and forecast data to create a plume model, and using GeoCollaborate™...

GeoCollaborate’s data dashboard apps displaying critical geospatial datasets for users.



Rafael Ameller accepting Tibbetts Award from Small Business Administration representatives.