Bar Codes Track Traffic Signs

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Barcodes help Arizona city manage safety, growth

Problem:

Chandler, Arizona is a major suburb of Phoenix and has grown from a 1980 population of 30,000 to a 2007 figure over 240,000. Like many fast growing cities, Chandler must continually expand transportation infrastructure, including traffic signage.

Traffic signs help keep the growing city safe and reducing traffic jams, confusion and accidents.

However, maintaining these assets can prove challenging.

The City's transportation department has over 15,000 traffic signs in use and each sign lasts about five years before needing replacement. Chandler replaces or installs 5,000 signs each year which is a continuous battle to replace what's damaged, stolen or worn out.

But Chandler was managing its traffic signage inventory manually. Their Sign Inventory System was generating a work order that staff would print and take with them to the field. When the work was complete, the annotated work order would be returned to the office for use in updating the signage database which is a time consuming process that was open to errors.

The transportation department knew improvement to sign data collection and management processes would help with their growing volume of work.

Solution:

A first step for Chandler's transportation department was linking their Geographic Information System and Sign Inventory System. Tying each sign to a location and other traffic information was important to creating efficient use of existing data.

Next, barcode technology was deployed to facilitate accurate data collection within the Sign Inventory System.

In April 2005, Chandler began applying Metalcraft's foil barcode labels to the backs of new and existing street signage. In addition to the barcode area, each label identifies the City of Chandler and lists a phone number and the human readable number to help citizens report damage.

For data collection, Chandler uses a scanner and Pocket PC to read the barcode, collect GPS data and enter the associated sign information. This barcode is the unique ID for each sign in the database. All work orders, mapping and queries about a sign are based on its unique ID.

Result:

While the City has not calculated time or money saved by the improvements, Chandler's new systems provide easy tracking of the city's traffic signs. The digital inventory, aided by barcodes generates accurate work orders for sign installation, replacement and maintenance. Now updating information for the signs involves keystrokes, not pen strokes.

"We do not have to manually enter a number for a sign," said Hong Huo, Chandler's traffic engineering analyst. "The barcode system improved the accuracy of our inventory system."

Moreover, integration with GIS assists with analysis, mapping and information queries. Traffic signs in Chandler are more manageable today.

"Barcode technology remains very effective in a lot of asset management roles," said Steve Doerfler, Metalcraft's president. "The durability of Metalcraft's photo anodised foil labels ensures accurate and reliable reads during the life of a traffic sign or other durable asset."

Call **0490 039 278** or visit **www.idtracon.com.au** for more information on **idtra*con*** bar code asset tags and their customers solutions.

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