

Information Technology

Inbox Edition



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The Overland Fire: GIS Takes a Place at the Table

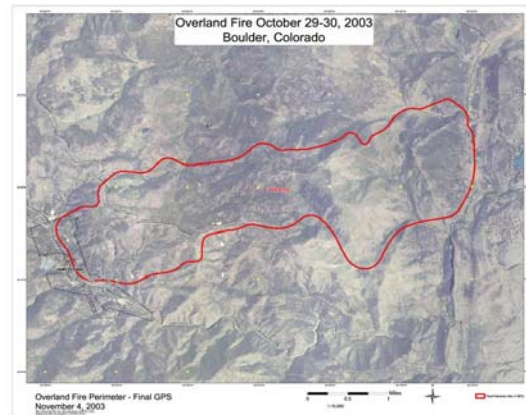


It's early Wednesday morning, October 29th, 2003, when a power line blows down, igniting a small grass fire just west of Jamestown, Co., near Overland Road and Boulder County Road 87. By late morning, high winds are sweeping across the mountains, pushing the fire toward homes and ranches along Lefthand Canyon and US 36.

In 18 hours, the Overland Fire will "run" 5 miles east, consume almost 3900 acres of forest, burn 12 homes, and force the evacuation of hundreds of residents.

270 firefighters will respond. And among the newest members of the fire-fighting team are highly trained Geographic Information System (GIS) operators from City Parks, Planning & Development Services, and Information Technology who will make maps essential to the fire crews as they work to save lives and property. 80 maps are produced on the first day alone to help the fire fighting effort. The maps aid crews by providing scaled information more current and detailed than typical maps. Current aerial photography provides a birdseye view of the fire site. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words.

Preparations for mapping support for fires, floods and other emergencies began a year ago with the purchase of equipment for the City/County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), located in the second floor of the Public Safety Building in Boulder. GIS practitioners from around the region gathered in January, 2003, to practice for such an emergency. In April, GIS was part of the annual flood drill, and produced maps to support fire and law enforcement personnel in the field. By the time of the Overland Fire, GIS teams were ready.



The backbone of enterprise GIS in Boulder is the City-wide data repository. The repository is a one-stop location for map layers from aerial photography to zoning. It is the result of three years of cooperative effort between numerous city departments and Boulder County. There are over 400 layers of map information available to all city and County staff. A core group of about 10 employees keeps the map layers up to date on a monthly basis.

Equipment, training, data and staff all came together at the EOC to make mapping possible during the Overland fire emergency. The water quality group is now using the burn perimeter layer to plan for spring runoff contamination abatement. The County Assessor is using this layer in its GIS to assess the damage to property. Soon state and local agencies will use GIS to plan restoration efforts. Lessons learned from this emergency are being used make GIS more mobile and more useful in the future.

City of Boulder Receives Digital Technology Honor

For the third year in a row, the Center for Digital Government has named Boulder among the top ten cities in the nation for e-government. The ranking is part of the Digital Cities Annual Survey which examines and assesses how city governments are progressing in utilizing information technology to streamline operations and deliver quality service to their residents.

Officials responded to a set of 16 questions and ranked their jurisdictions according to a four-point scale, providing Web site addresses and background data for final verification and validation. The survey grouped cities into three categories based on population. Boulder ranked sixth in the 75,000-125,000 category.

"The survey and ranking helped to confirm for us the positive direction we're taking with the city of Boulder Web site," said Christopher Puccio, Boulder's IT director. "We've worked very hard to be sure it meets the expectations of Boulder's population. Virtually every resident of our community has access to the internet at home, work or school."

Interactive features on the [city's Web site](#) include, in part, online registration for classes in Parks and Recreation and Senior Services; a searchable rental housing database; a form to report any Public Works concern in the city; online applications for city jobs; a streaming video library of past City Council meetings; live streaming video of Channel 8; a map of all projects in the city's development review process; an interactive crime map; an interactive web site for various electronic maps of Boulder, on-line bill paying for utility customers; and the Boulder Public Library's catalog.

For more information on the survey, visit the [Center for Digital Government](#) site.

TECH BITS

GroupWise Attachments—Where, oh where, did my edits go? When you open an email attachment in the associated application (i.e.—Word, Excel, WordPerfect), it allows you to make edits, and even 'save' the edits, **but they are not really saved.** As soon as you close the file, the edits (and often the file itself) are gone because they were only saved in a temporary directory. **The solution?** If you plan to make and save changes to a file attachment, open the file and choose Save As, saving the file to a location other than the default temp folder. Once you've completed and saved the changes, if you need to return the file to the sender, you must reattach the file to your email.

Got GIS? Did you know there is a layer of high resolution aerial photography of Boulder, available from the GIS repository? If you need a birds-eye view of land, from trees and shrubs to manhole lids, try the new "Color2003" air photo layer. (It overlays nicely with our other layers.) If you need information about the land or what's on it, GIS is for you. Call the help desk (x3086) to arrange for an ArcGIS install. Quarterly classes are available to learn how to use this handy program.

ASK THE EXPERT

[Submit a question for the expert](#)

Dear Expert:

I get a lot of email spam both at work and at home. How do these people get my address, and what can I do to reduce spam? What is the city doing to reduce spam in GroupWise?
Yours truly,
M. Python

Dear M. Python,

Spam is annoying, time consuming, and often offensive when it shows up in your inbox. For system administrators in charge of maintaining an organization's e-mail system, it is expensive in bandwidth, hardware and employee hours. The solution most often deployed is a 'spam filter,' such as the MX Logic service recently employed for city email. No system is flawless, but there are some things you can do to help improve the filtering, and consequently reduce spam without missing important email.

What the City is Doing: The New MX Logic Filter System

COB's new spam filtering service has a multilayered approach to determining what messages should be allowed through and which ones should be quarantined. Content filtering, virus scanning and attachment filtering are all parts of the new service provided by MX Logic.

How will all this affect you? First, messages will arrive in your mailbox virus-free. If someone

sends you an attachment with a virus that cannot be cleaned, the attachment will be removed and you will receive the rest of the message, indicating that the attachment has been removed. Second, messages that the filters identify as spam will be collected and a summary will be sent to you in e-mail, allowing you to review those messages and decide which ones you want to read or allow through and which you want to delete. Finally, messages with content the filters identify as racially insensitive or which contain profanity or sexual overtones will be sent to you, but with a tag in the subject notifying you about the content.

What Can You Do to Reduce Spam?

While the MX Logic system should help COB to better handle spam, there are things that you can do to protect yourself and others, as well. The Center for Democracy and Technology spent several months in 2002 doing an extensive study on what types of Internet activities generate the most spam. Their findings showed that there are some easy things that you can do to prevent spammers from getting your e-mail address in the first place.

The number one way spammers get people's e-mail addresses, the study found, was through addresses posted on web pages. If your COB e-mail address is posted on a web page, ask for it to be disguised using HTML numeric equivalents.

For example, the "@ci.boulder.co.us" part of your e-mail address would appear in the page's HTML code as:

```
"&#064;&#099;&#105;&#046;&#098;&#111;  
&#117;&#108;&#100;&#101;&#114;&#046;  
&#099;&#111;&#046;&#117;&#115;"
```

Your address would look normal on the web page itself, but the HTML code, where spammers look, would list a meaningless address.

You should also use caution when entering your e-mail address on outside web pages. Make sure the website is for a legitimate company, and read the entire form carefully to check for opt-out e-mail lists before sending the information. If you receive spam from a company that you do not recognize, do not respond to the message and ask them to remove you from their list. Since many spammers are ethically-challenged, they simply use your message as verification that the address is valid, and spam you even more.

Finally, some spam appeals to your sense of decency and uses you to propagate it. Messages asking you to help a dying child by forwarding the message on, warn your friends about a potentially dangerous situation or product, or simple chain letters that you forward to friends and associates, all add to the volume of unnecessary e-mail for everyone to deal with. Some of these messages can be fun, but check before you send them to see if they are an urban legend or a hoax, and choose only one or two people to send them to (preferably ones you know will appreciate it).

For more information, here are some handy and interesting Spam links:

- [CIAC's Hoaxbusters List](#)
- [The Center for Democracy and Technology Spam Study Report](#)
- [HTML Numeric Equivalent Converter](#)

[Configure Your MX Logic Account](#)

You must set a password before you can change settings on MX Logic account. Look for the password link on the bottom of the spam report email. Your MX Logic username will be your full city email address, all lower-case (<mailto:i.e.-smithj@ci.boulder.co.us>).

POLICY CORNER

The computer software training program offered by IT will change in 2004. Due to funding reductions, we will no longer offer regularly scheduled training classes from contracted instructors. We will continue to offer training classes led by city of Boulder staff instructors. In addition, upon registration for any class, you may be asked for an account number to cover the

cost of the instructor, materials or support staff time.

If there is significant interest in a previously offered class, and if participants agree to fund all costs upon scheduling, we will gladly assist with arranging the instructor and training room, as we have done in the past for regularly scheduled classes. Also, the training room and amenities will remain available for department or workgroup-led training sessions.

For more information, see the [training intraweb Site](#), or call us at 303-441-3080, option 3.

NET NEWS

[Symantec Virus Hoax Information Page](#)

Almost as annoying as getting a virus is thinking you've got one, warning friends and colleagues, and then discovering that it was a hoax. Before you delete any files or forward dire warnings to everyone in your address book, check out Symantec's official list of virus hoaxes. Find your "virus" here, and you don't have to worry any more.

[IT Intraweb FAQ Index](#)

Can't recall how to backup your Internet Explorer favorites? Need help using your cd-rom burner for the first time? Like to create a GroupWise vacation rule? These topics, and many more, can be found in the Frequently Asked Questions area of the IT Intraweb.