



July 21, 2009

Air, ground images to aid V'land rescue units

By KRISTI FUNDERBURK

Staff Writer

VINELAND -- The city's emergency personnel soon will be using a series of bird's-eye views and ground-level images to help improve pre-planning and response time to calls.

The city's Police Department used an \$110,000 grant to hire two companies to take both oblique aerial photos and street-level shots of the city's 69 square miles for the 9-1-1 Communications Center to use when dispatching emergency personnel, Vineland police Sgt. Christopher Fulcher said.

He expects the images will be available for department use by the end of the month or early August, he said.

"We will have a whole lot more specific directions in terms of where we are going and how we might get there," Fulcher said.

Pictometry International took oblique aerial shots last fall when tree branches were bare to create a bird's eye view of the city with varied angles to show how tall buildings are and where windows and doors are located, said Victor Terenik Jr., the city's information systems director.

Those photos will be compiled with newer images Canada-based firm iLOOKABOUT took from the street level, he said.

When the partner companies merge their images, they will create a top-to-bottom view of the city for Vineland's emergency personnel, Jeff Young, iLOOKABOUT's chief executive officer, said.

"A combination of both overhead and street-level shots will give us the opportunity to see all sides of a building's areas, especially where we don't have access," Vineland fire Chief Robert Pagnini said.

Pictometry, a Rochester-based corporation, flew over 85 square miles to capture close range, high-resolution photos of all corners and edges of the state's largest city by square mile, Fulcher said.

It also is adding floor plans of city schools and Cumberland Mall to help first-responders know where to go upon arrival, he said.

"That's going to help us identify areas in a building where utilities are. It will help us along with the pre-plan programming, and it will help us identify where the hazards are in the building, as well," Fulcher said.

An iLOOKABOUT vehicle drove on each street in Vineland's 69 square miles while a camera with a lens that captures 180 degrees automatically snapped a picture every 15 feet, Young said.

The city will be able to pan along streets and zoom in and out to get the best angles, he said.

"The way it's set up is so we don't miss anything," Young said.

Vineland is the first city in the state to use iLOOKABOUT for emergency services, he said, though other municipalities have been using the company for property assessment purposes.

The images only will be accessible to personnel in the city's 9-1-1 Communications Center, Fulcher said. But he hopes to eventually have the images accessible in police cruisers and City Hall for planning, economic development, tax assessment and geographic information systems.
