

Speeded up emergency response times

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Intelligent Addressing's Gayle Gander rebuts a previous article in the September issue of Contingency Today, which advocated the creation of a super gazetteer, a national database of all addresses, to speed up emergency response times. Gayle Gander points out that such a super gazetteer already exists by the name of the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG)

The September issue of Contingency Today carried an article discussing the use of address gazetteers to enable the blue light services to quickly find callers for emergency help. The article advocated the creation of a 'super gazetteer' which would speed up the identification of a correct address.

In fact, such a 'super gazetteer' already exists and is underpinning the business of local authorities across England and Wales. Its called the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG).

Intelligent Addressing is the Custodian of the National Land and Property Gazetteer and the National Street Gazetteer (NSG). The NLPG was initiated in 1999 to become the master address dataset for England and Wales and the central hub for the 376 address creating Local Authorities and their Local Land and Property Gazetteers (LLPGs). All Local Authorities create their LLPGs using common data entry conventions, that are application independent, based upon the British Standard BS7666. This means that the NLPG contains address information that is equally valid for highways as it is for education departments. Local Government has invested £100 million in creating the NLPG and is committed to using the NLPG for all of its addressing requirements and services moving forward.

Based on Unique Property Reference Numbers (UPRNs) the underlying principle of these gazetteers is to provide a single definitive address database for all departments and systems across a local authority in order to cut costs, improve efficiency and service delivery.

Because of their legal responsibilities, local authorities are the originators of addressable objects throughout the 'property lifecycle', obtained through their activities such as planning applications, building and environmental control, licensing, the electoral roll, council tax and non-domestic rates. Throughout its lifecycle, information on an address of a property can change. This may be due to a change of name or number, a sub-division or aggregation of an address within a building, changes of use, for example from single occupancy to multiple occupancy, both for

domestic and business properties or the eventual demolition of the property. All of these historic, alias and provisional addresses are recorded against the same UPRN. Information on the timing and nature of the change will be known first by the local authority as part of their normal processes before being passed onto any other agency.

The NLPG enables various local authority departments – from revenue collection and environmental health, to social security, the electoral roll and education – to offer true 'joined up' government. The benefits also go beyond service delivery; fraud prevention, tax collection and disaster planning all benefit from the fact that each property is given a UPRN which transcends (property) numbers, names, descriptions (such as 'The Nursing Home') and postcodes.

Having access to the most up-to-date information on every property type, including multi-occupied premises is not only vital to the Council itself for services such as community safety, local taxation and voting, but also for its partners such as the emergency services who often need to analyse incidents and mobilise to a high degree of location accuracy.

The national FiReControl Project, which is a major CLG initiative that is working to move from the existing 46 Fire and Rescue control room infrastructure to 9 new amalgamated Regional Control Centres, has chosen the NLPG as its base address dataset. The NLPG will be used to assist with initial call taking, helping to accurately determine the location of the incident from the information given by the caller. It will enable the identification of the closest appropriate Fire and Rescue Service Resources, based on the travel time to the determined incident location. It will communicate the location of the incident to the mobilised resources. It will also act as a means of linking to other (operationally or control specific) information known about specific locations and will assist with recording the incident details for risk assessment and reporting purposes.

CLG is working closely with local authorities to support the implementation within the fire and rescue service community. As part of the arrangements, the fire and rescue services will become regular and intensive users of the NLPG, and this will generate a volume of change information. This will be fed back to local authorities via the national hub and will facilitate continuous improvement in the integrity of the information locally. It will also enable the fire and police services to propose 'candidate' records for inclusion in the NLPG, providing a framework for a gazetteer 'that does the lot'. A number of Local Authorities are already working closely with regional fire and rescue services to align their data and move forward using the NLPG.

Additionally, use of a common base dataset and referencing system will enhance the ability of fire and rescue services to interchange data with local authorities. This will ensure that the new Regional Control Centres can mobilise resources using top quality and consistent location information.

The co-operation with local authorities through data sharing is a fundamental part of the resilience agenda and an exemplar for the information sharing aspects of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA).

The 'blue light' services subscribe to the data management principles behind the NLPG. The basis of the NLPG model is that the address matching/lookup stage is temporary and occurs at the implementation stage. At this point any mismatches are resolved and incorporated into the NLPG if necessary. Subsequently the UPRN is adopted as the definitive identifier. This means that it is unnecessary to maintain multiple datasets or look-ups tables between datasets.

Without the NLPG as a master data source, organizations will have significant hidden costs in keeping their data up to date. Every time an application or organisation wants to share information it necessitates an expensive address matching exercise to resolve mismatches. Using the NLPG allows an organisation to match once, resolve once and maintain forever.

Maintaining large address datasets to a high standard requires specialist expertise and local knowledge. The NLPG is the only national dataset to have direct access to over 500 addressing experts located throughout England and Wales dedicated to the task of continually updating the NLPG and working in partnership with the emergency services.

Gayle Gander
Head of Marketing
Intelligent Addressing
Ivybridge House, 1 Adam Street
London, WC2N 6DD
ggander@intelligent-addressing.co.uk
020 7747 3500
www.nlpg.org.uk
www.thensg.org.uk