BCG
Buffalo Computer Graphics

DLAN

Tools for Daily Use

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Introduction

Using DisasterLAN (DLAN) for daily operations not only helps keep staff prepared for emergency operations, but also ensures you get the most out of your software investment.

There are many ways DLAN can be used to optimize daily operations; here are our top 5:

Figure 1: Daily Operations

Each of these topics are explained in detail on the following pages, with some real examples from our current DLAN customers

5: Daily Monitoring

DLAN can be utilized to monitor information from multiple external sources, including video, social media, and weather feeds. This makes it an ideal tool for 24/7 duty officers, on call staff, or anyone else who is in charge of monitoring situations that may escalate into emergencies. DLAN also allows staff to easily share information through interoperable communication channels and log all information within one unified system.

24/7 Duty Officer and On Call Staff

DLAN is commonly used by duty officers and watch command units for 24/7 monitoring of any daily event that might escalate into an emergency incident. DLAN's Watch Command is specifically designed to support continuous or steady state operations.

For organizations that do not have full-time 24/7 staff, DLAN also makes it easy for "on call" staff to be alerted if a situation needs further attention. Incoming messages can be setup to alert on call staff by email or text message. They can also automatically be turned into tickets for easy task management.

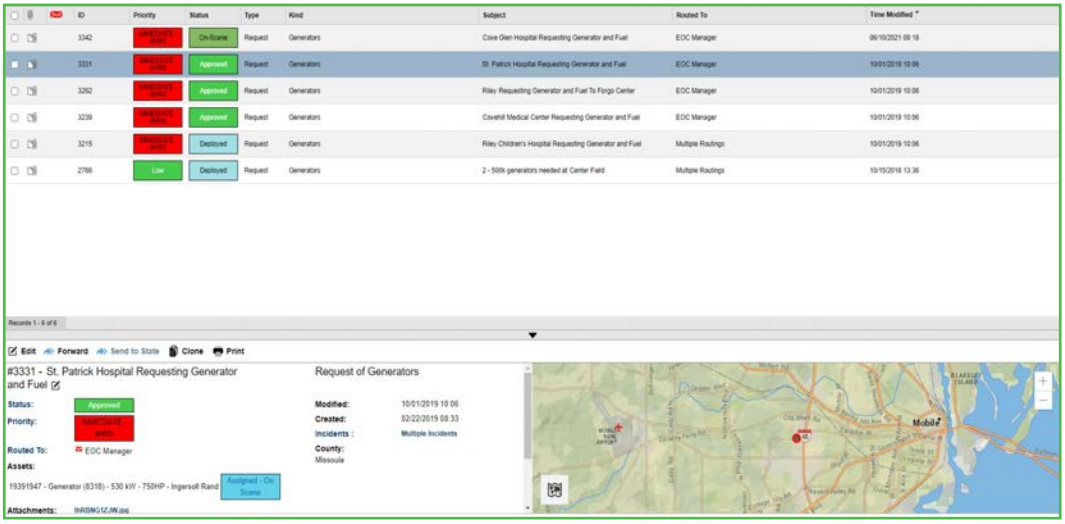

Figure 2: Watch Command

Information Monitoring & Sharing

DLAN has a number of information monitoring tools. DLAN's Communication Center is used to monitor news, weather, and other current event data from external sources. DLAN's Streaming Video allows users to monitor any IP-based video feed, including streaming and snapshot cameras, for improved situational awareness. Role-based email monitoring allows each role to send and receive emails specifically for their role. Users can post important messages into actionable tickets, either individually or through automated business processes.

When an important alert or notification is received, users can forward information to internal and external recipients. DLAN administrators can create distribution groups consisting of DLAN users, phonebook contacts, custom recipients, and COG's. This means all stakeholders can be notified instantly without creating multiple messages in different systems. Users can even post messages to the public using Twitter directly from within DLAN.

4: Executive Oversight

DLAN allows for easy executive oversight both for individual incidents and across all incidents in the system. Executive level dashboards and reports can be customized based on roles and permission levels.

Executive Reports and Notifications

Executives can quickly view high priority and life safety tasks within the Ticket Manager. They can also see what tasks are overdue and need attention. Custom reports can be created for each incident and reports can also show tasks across all incidents.

Workflows can also be created so that tasks that need executive approval for funding etc. will be automatically routed to the appropriate manager.

DLAN's stakeholder notifications improve situational awareness among individuals not directly responsible for working on a task or ticket, such as executives and outside agencies. The CC function shares ticket information with internal and external staff as an Email. This helps to keep all essential personnel informed about requests, tasks, reports, or donations without needing to log into DLAN. All replies are added to the ticket log in DLAN, keeping all essential information in one place.

Comprehensive Status Boards

DLAN's status board displays multiple types of internal and external information in a dashboard format. Executives can view high level incident information and dig deeper into reports as necessary. Views are fully customizable and can be created per incident or across all incidents.

Figure 3: Executive Overview Dashboard

3: Task Management

Although the Ticket Manager was designed specifically to handle emergency management related tasks, its automated workflow settings, custom statuses and priorities, and robust security features make it ideal for any sort of task management. DLAN customers have used DLAN for facility, infrastructure, and project management. BCG uses the system internally for managing customer requests, DLAN development task tracking, and managing tasks related to our training sessions and documentation.

Customizable Task Management

Based on the ticket type or kind, different statuses, priorities, and routing options can be presented to the user. For example, the life safety priority is a logical inclusion for emergency management, but wouldn't be appropriate for a broken monitor in a classroom. DLAN is smart enough to display appropriate ticket statuses and priorities based on the ticket type, kind, and other parameters.

The Ticket Wizard guides users through a simple step-by-step question and answer process to ensure tickets are filled out completely and correctly. This creates a streamlined task management process that can be used for different types of task management with very little training.

DLAN's Ticket Manager Premium supports automated decision-making tools for determining how to route tickets and data to the appropriate role on the system based on type, kind, and priority of information entered. This creates automated workflows and simplifies ticket data entry.

Status & Priority Locking reduces and simplifies the status and priority choices that are available to users when working with a ticket. It allows an administrator to build process "gates" and "check-stops" by crafting statuses and priorities that are specific to a group, department, or workflow and only extending the ability to use those statuses and priorities to specific users.

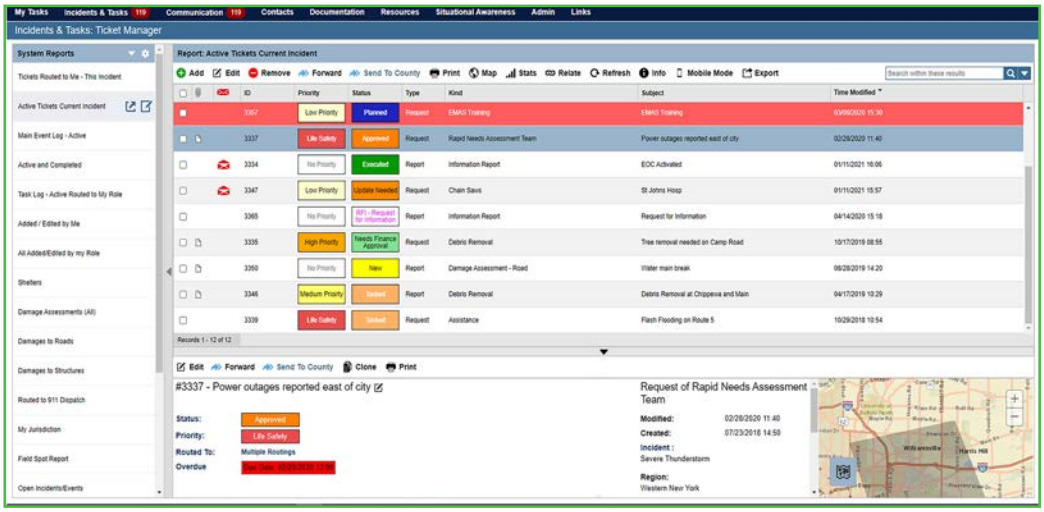

Figure 4: Ticket Manager Premium

Status workflow mapping allows administrators to control the chain of statuses a ticket must go through for improved workflows (e.g. "funding approved" before "tasked"), further improving workflows.

These features combined create customized workflows that can be used for any type of task management.

3: Task Management *continued*

Featured Use Case **Project & Program Management**

DLAN can be expanded beyond emergency operations to include project and program management. Projects include using DLAN to plan trainings, exercises, and other events; tracking building and vehicle maintenance; and other routine office tasks. For these projects DLAN can be used to manage the assignment of tasks and track information for these tasks. By using DLAN for these tasks, you are not only saving money by not needing to purchase additional software, but are also keeping staff well trained in the use of DLAN for when it is needed in an emergency.

2: Mobile Form Entry

DLAN allows field staff to enter information from any location and any device, even when disconnected. This lends itself to many different types of daily use from Covid-19 safety check-ins and inventory ordering to infrastructure inspections and site assessments.

Mobile Forms

DLAN's Mobile Responder App uses a simple form interface to allow field staff to easily communicate essential information, even in areas with no connectivity.
The Mobile Responder App allows field staff to work offline with any mobile form on their system. The App stores all report data locally on the device and automatically sends it to DLAN whenever connectivity is reestablished. This "store and forward" capability ensures data integrity and usability under the most adverse conditions.

The app is available from the Apple App and Google Play stores and can be utilized from most phones and tablets. Using the Mobile Responder, users can send data, images, and videos from their mobile devices into DLAN.

Assigned Task Mode

DLAN simplifies the user experience by focusing their attention on only the tools they need to do their job. The Assigned Task Mode in the Mobile App helps field workers gather all the information they will need throughout their shift so they can access everything they need regardless of connectivity. Additional tasks can be pushed to a field worker in real time and completed ones will synchronize to DLAN when published.

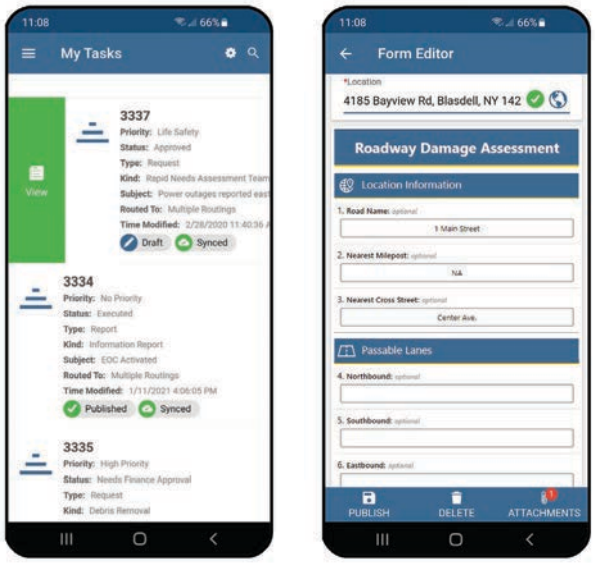

Figure 5: Mobile Responder App

2: Mobile Form Entry *continued*

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Featured Use Case — **Bus Drivers Tracking Road Damages**

The Mobile Responder App can be used by bus drivers to report on road damages. Since bus drivers drive the same route every day, they are typically the first to see potential problems and damages to roads. They can quickly insert the information into the app while performing their normal activities. This means not only does the transportation department get this information quickly, they also do not need to send out their own staff to do daily checks. This saves both time and money. As an added bonus, since the transportation department and emergency management department use the same system, the EOC can also consume this data and monitor for any major transportation disruptions.

1: Digitize Common Daily Processes

DLAN allows users to simplify any current paper form process by digitizing it. This means no more illegible writing or missing fields. It also limits the need for phone calls and eliminates duplicate data entry. In addition, it gives managers access to real time data and reports.

Custom Forms and Processes

As described in the previous two sections, DLAN allows users to create custom forms and workflow logic.

DLAN's administrative tools allow for custom form creation using an intuitive interface. Forms can include a number of elements including dropdown lists and checkboxes. Administrators can create custom forms for data collection for use in both the Ticket Manager and Mobile Responder App. When a user fills out a digital form, as opposed to a paper form, all of the information is legible, mandatory fields can be enforced, and the information is available as soon as field staff connect to the system. It also means no staff member needs to re-enter paper forms into a digital system, saving a lot of time and money.

1: Digitize Common Daily Processes *continued*

Once a form is submitted to DLAN, custom workflows can automatically process the information and route it to the necessary personal for task completion. The information can also be included in boards and reports.

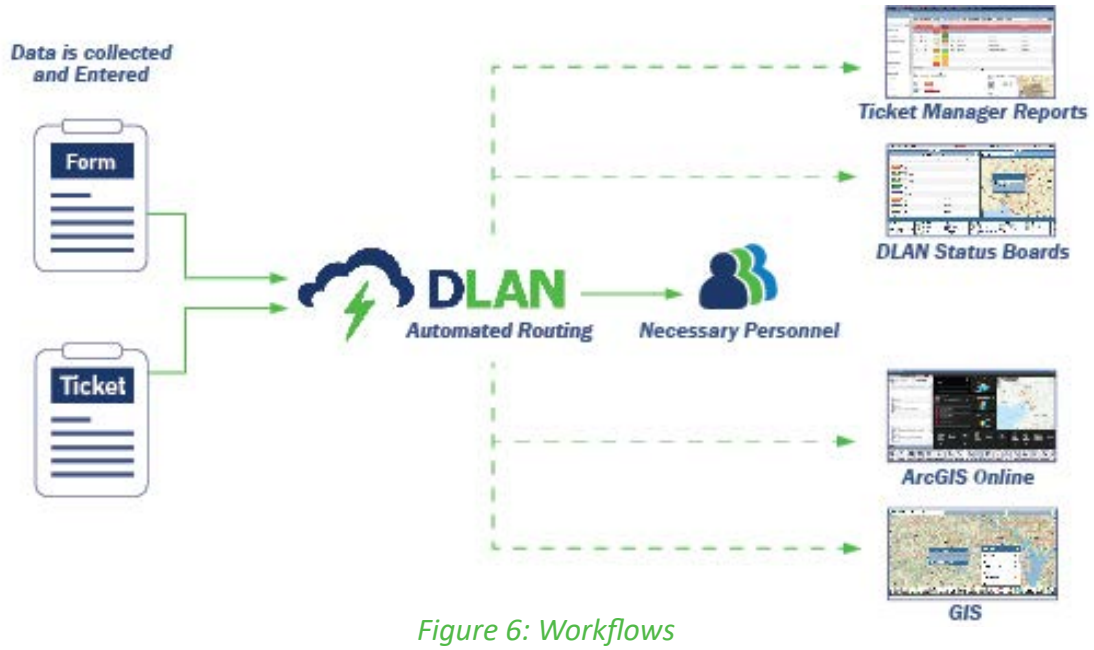

Figure 6: Workflows

Preparedness Toolkit (Ticket Templates)

With the Preparedness Toolkit, users can create ticket templates and template reports associated with various processes (i.e. monthly maintenance tasks, yearly exercise planning, and common resource requests). Templates allow users to draft pre-planned tasks associated with a process. Ticket Templates allow tickets to be setup ahead of time, including: log entries, priority, status, routings, forms, contacts, CC recipients, and attachments.

As an example, when planning for a yearly exercise, there are certain tasks you know will need to be performed each time, such as booking rooms, requesting AV equipment, and prepping scenarios. These can be pre-loaded as templates so at the start of planning cycle, the tickets can be activated and the responsible roles assigned to each task. This saves times and ensures all essential tasks are assigned and completed.

Printing

Digital copies are stored and backed-up within DLAN, but sometimes paper copies are necessary for regulatory compliance. DLAN's packet printing feature allows all forms and tickets to be printed as hard copies. Packet printing allows users to customize the style and content of tickets when they are printed. With this feature, users can reorder segments of a ticket (e.g. individual forms, individual attachments, contact sections) and choose which data to include when printed. This means processes can be efficiently completed within the DLAN system and hard copies can also be created as needed.

Conclusion

Although DLAN's main function is to help emergency managers plan for, respond to, and report on emergency incidents, the software's robust task management, communication, and situational awareness tools make it easily adaptable to an array of workflows and processes. This paper presents just a few of the ways DLAN is currently being used for daily operations. BCG subject matter experts and DLAN customers are always coming up with innovative ways to utilize DLAN to get the most out of the software.

Contact Us

About BCG

DLAN is engineered by Buffalo Computer Graphics, Inc. (BCG), a veteran owned small business that has over 35 years of experience in software, hardware, and systems engineering. We have earned a reputation for providing superior products and excellent service to both our private sector and government customers. All of our engineering is done in house by our experienced and talented team. In addition to working closely with our customers to determine their exact needs, BCG prides itself on our ability to provide quick and expert support on all systems we have installed. Our core belief in developing relationships, not just selling products, sets us apart from our competitors.

About FutureShield

BCG has partners with a dedicated Canadian Subject Matter Expert, FutureShield Inc., to bring DLAN to the Canadian marketplace. FutureShield's Founder and President, Cynthia Weeden, has over 30 years of recognized experience in strategic leadership roles. Cynthia offers her expertise to assist the leaders in Canadian emergency management, including critical infrastructure and government organizations, as they work to integrate innovative technology into their daily operations. In 2021 Cynthia was selected by Women's Executive Network, as one of Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100 2021 Award Winners in the category of BMO Entrepreneurs.