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BENALLA COMPANY ADOPTS SMART AND 'RUGGED' TECHNOLOGY FOR FIXING VIC ROADS

Benalla based company, Road Development & Construction Pty Ltd has recently implemented leading edge technology in a move that has automated its method of identifying, precisely locating and recording details of road maintenance defects. A major contractor to VicRoads throughout the State, RDC has achieved major productivity improvements following the move from a paper-based system of identification and logging of observed defects in road surfaces and shoulders to one where vehicle-mounted ruggedised touch screen tablet PCs are used. RDC has purchased five Xplore Dual Mode fully ruggedised tablet PCs with GPS from supplier Antares Corporation in Sydney.

RDC Managing Director, Dion Stevenson reports that significant productivity improvements have been achieved since their implementation in mid-2005. "In addition, our field staff (Operations Managers), even some who had little or no prior computer experience, have taken to the units with great enthusiasm" said Dion. "There were some concerns initially, but once they had used them and understood how simple they were to operate with their touch-screen capability, the excellent readability of the screen in direct sunlight and their ability to withstand rough treatment, they have all become great fans of the Xplores".

The RDC Xplores are vehicle mounted and used by their Operations Managers who typically only visit the office every week or two. In the field, they are recording details and location of road defects using an integrated GPS. They will then synchronise the data over a phone line at the end of the day using a modem link to the company's server. At the same time they receive updated data from the server so that both field staff and the company management have, on a day-to-day basis, a virtually real-time status record of all road defects and rectification in their area of responsibility. Each unit also has a keyboard attached which can be used if required for making lengthier comments.

Antares Corporation Managing Director, Peter King, reports that before RDC implemented this new system, the field staff were making paper-based notes on defects which were faxed to the office overnight and then the data was entered into their computer system by office staff. "This new approach clearly is far more efficient, provides precise location of defects and road damage (and removes the chance of error) and automates the whole process", commented Peter, who added that the RDC use of the Xplore rugged PCs was a 'classical' application for these devices where they were bound to receive some rough handling, where the integrated GPS was a vital component and where the touch-screen capability was the preferred method of interaction.

Peter King added "not only does RDC's investment in this technology make sense for them through the greater precision and cost efficiencies achieved but this obviously flows through to a better result for VicRoads which means that we (the motorists) all benefit!"

Tel: 1300 884 565

www.antares.com.au

For further information contact Antares Corporation on 1300 884 565 or email sales@antares.com.au