

SMART Profile Canadian Red Cross



Canadian Red Cross staff are trained on how to use the SMART Board interactive whiteboard for disaster response.

People helping people with SMART products

Flooding forced the closure of highways east and west of Terrace, British Columbia, Canada, in May 2007. Water rose about a meter and a half above normal levels, and Canadian Red Cross staff and volunteers were on the ground supporting families forced from their homes. The not-for-profit humanitarian organization used SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards to help the people who needed it most.

“Having the most up-to-date information is crucial during a disaster response,” says Golnaz Aliyarzadeh, operations manager. “We previously used flip charts and overhead projectors. The information would be placed all over the walls, and we would replace the charts twice a day. Now we can easily change the information on the interactive whiteboard to provide our call center agents with the latest response information.”

Terrace isn't the only community the Canadian Red Cross has assisted during flooding. The Red Cross and the provincial government have set up the B.C. Flood Information Line to answer questions about flooding, evacuations, road closures and safety precautions. The information is recorded on a SMART Board interactive whiteboard.

“It's just easier with the computer and the SMART Board interactive whiteboard,” says Aliyarzadeh. “You can add or delete information easily. You just pick up the pen and write information as it comes in, allowing you to get the latest information out to the public.”

For three years the Canadian Red Cross has worked to upgrade its disaster response facility in Burnaby, B.C. In February, it purchased three SMART Board interactive whiteboards. The touch-sensitive interactive whiteboards are connected to computers and projectors through a USB cable so computer images can be displayed on the interactive whiteboard. Simply by touching the board, people can access and control any computer application or audio-visual source, including the Internet, CDs and DVDs. With SMART Board software, users can write over applications in digital ink then edit, save, e-mail and print their notes.

“This technology has many benefits,” says Aliyarzadeh. “We can show the disaster site and can easily go back and forth between satellite shots of the disaster area and the notes on the interactive board. People can save their work onto their own computer. The potential for this technology is tremendous.”

The Canadian Red Cross doesn't use technology only for crises. It uses the interactive whiteboard to train volunteers and staff on local programs, including first aid and water safety, abuse and violence prevention, humanitarian issues and loan services for health equipment.

“The interactive whiteboard has improved the efficiency of our office. It's not only easy to use – it's more environmentally friendly because we use less paper,” says Aliyarzadeh. “Rather than printing meeting agendas, we now use the board.”

“Purchasing the board has been a good decision for us. Our colleagues across the country were so impressed by the technology,” says Aliyarzadeh. “Every office should have one.”

The Canadian Red Cross purchased the SMART products through Conti Audiovisual & Surveillance.

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