

## **How GIS is Making Palm Beach County Safer**

Palm Beach County Fire Rescue has taken another step forward in protecting its citizens and their property. An extensive multi-organizational project is underway to use GPS to record and verify the locations of the fire hydrants throughout Palm Beach County. Whether you live in a city or in unincorporated Palm Beach County, the hydrants near you will be in this updated GIS database.

Countywide there are over 45,000 hydrants. All of these hydrants appear on HydrantNav, a web based map application used by 911 dispatchers. By clicking on a hydrant, the user can see its location, flow rates, etc. (whether a hydrant is operational or not).

Fire Rescue staff are using a GPS unit out in the field to verify locations of hydrants and add new hydrants to the database.

HydrantNav is also used to update the status of a hydrant so that dispatchers can provide real time information to fire fighters en route to a fire. When the crew is on the way to a fire, dispatch gives them information on the closest hydrant to the scene, as well as any other hydrants in the area. If an engine reaches a hydrant which for some reason does not function properly, the crew is already aware of the next closest hydrant and can quickly maneuver to that location.

Knowing the location of a hydrant prior to arriving on the scene and knowing the site of the nearest secondary hydrant allows firefighters to plan their actions in advance. This saves time in fighting a fire, which can reduce damage to a structure, its contents, and reduces the potential for loss of lives.