Cal COP Newsletter

In This Issue

- Assessment Templates
- Special Events Data
- System Updates
- Welcome Amy

Important Links

Cal COP Website
Haystax Website

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Creating New Assessment Types Just Got Quicker

Up until this year, creating a new type of Cal COP assessment was a lengthy process. It involved the user requesting the assessment, the Haystax project manager, and at least one, but often more, Haystax engineer. The assessment use case was outlined in a working session with the engineer and questions and scoring discussed to determine what was possible. Then the user and Haystax project manager would collaborate to finalize the questions and scoring. An engineer would then review the assessment again prior to creating it and deploying it in the system for users to begin using. The idea-to-deployment time often spanned months.

To streamline the creation process for new assessment types and enable Haystax to be more responsive to customer needs and use cases, our engineering team re-envisioned this process, designing an assessment template builder. Our engineers used common approaches to assessment questions and scoring to create a tool within the system that enables any Haystax user to configure a new assessment type without requesting backend engineering support. The tool enables anyone from a director to an intern to create and edit assessment templates and their component questions, answers, and scoring methods. As a result, we can now move from discussion of the use case to building and deploying the template and making it available to users within the same day. Further, it facilitates timely updates to templates as requirements or needs change.

Our Customer Success team has already used this template builder over a dozen times. It has been used to create, among others:

- Fire stations status assessments, allowing fire station personnel to report and update the status of their site during an incident;

- Post-disaster phased assessments, asking different questions at timed intervals following a hurricane;

- Evacuation checklists;

- Vulnerability assessments;

- And, damage assessments.

Assessment Template, cont.

One of the most recent and novel use cases of the new assessment template builder is the Consolidated Assessment from the greater Houston region. The assessment is intended to leverage a public safety agency's visit to a specific critical infrastructure site for the benefit of other agencies or disciplines that may not have been intending on visiting or assessing that particular site. The Haystax team collaborated with a diverse group of subject matter experts from the Houston area to create a flexible, multi-disciplinary assessment for use on any critical infrastructure, but with variable question sets for healthcare facilities, schools, supply chain sites, and facilities used for some aspect of elections or voting.

Once the assessment is submitted, a score is generated indicating that the facility may benefit from a more in-depth assessment of its fire hazards, cybersecurity, or physical security. Thus, an assessment done by law enforcement personnel can alert fire agency personnel to previously unknown aspects about a facility that may warrant an in-depth assessment or further documentation. Additionally, the Consolidated Assessment can help provide valuable information in response situations. For example, security personnel at a supply chain distribution site for groceries can complete an assessment and provide valuable information to local emergency managers about what can be expected from the site after a major natural disaster in terms of its accessibility and return to normal operations.

If you wish to find out more about Houston's Consolidated Assessment or if you have a use case to develop a new assessment type, please reach out to your Haystax project manager.

Special Events Data Call Support

Each year, state and local agencies submit special event data to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Operations Coordination (OPS) for evaluation as Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR) events. OPS then assigns a SEAR level to the submitted events, ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most critical. Highly rated SEAR events enable local agencies to take advantage of federal assistance to fill local capability shortfalls in securing the event. Additionally, the submitted events data is an input to the Special Events Metric for the DHS Relative Risk Score that is used to allocate grant funds.

What agencies and jurisdictions do with the event data subsequent to gathering and submitting it to DHS, varies greatly. Recently, several jurisdictions have let us know that this process is often arduous and repetitive, and they were looking for a way to ease the reporting requirement for their stakeholders. To meet this need, the Haystax team used the guidance issued by DHS and consultations with key stakeholders to develop the ability to capture this event data within Cal COP. Utilizing the existing events app in the system, we expanded the previous event format to now address all the questions on the DHS events template. Users logging into Cal COP will now see the DHS Special Events option when creating new events (see image at right).
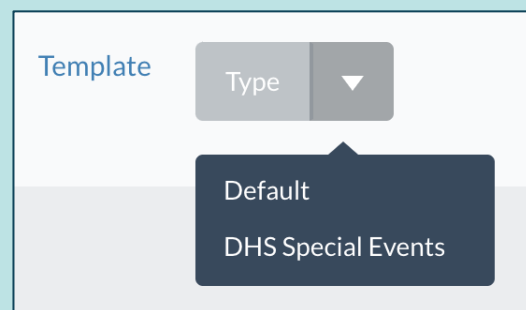
Once created, these events remain in the Cal COP system for update and use in subsequent years' SEAR data calls, as well as situational awareness/daily operations. Further, regional stakeholders who may normally send SEAR event data via spreadsheet can access Cal COP directly, eliminating the need for the person submitting the data to DHS to consolidate multiple documents. Instead, they can export a list from Cal COP for submission.

The DHS Special Events template will be updated each year based on the guidance released by DHS, as well as stakeholder feedback on any other needed data.

Haystax staff are available to help you gain familiarity with this new template and support its use and deployment to regional stakeholders. Please contact your Haystax project manager to discuss how to roll this out in your region and begin using the DHS Special Events template to gather and submit data for the SEAR data call.

Recent Updates

Since our last Cal COP Newsletter, the Haystax engineering team has been hard at work pushing out 24 system updates, including seven mobile updates. One of the most noticeable updates is the addition of the Priority Assessment. This assessment is an update of the Priority Assessment previously available in the Digital Sandbox 7-based version of Cal COP. Driven by user request, we recreated the assessment and expanded it. Now, upon submittal, the assessment recommends not only a priority level for within Cal COP but a priority level for use when submitting infrastructure data to the National Critical Infrastructure Prioritization Program (NCIPP). As with other assessments, the Priority Assessment is available within the Assessment app or from the assessment widget on the asset page.

Recent Cal COP updates also included considerable enhancements to the location widget on the asset page (see image at right). Users can now click to expand the map to full screen and view data similar to what is available within the full Map app. Base maps can now be changed. Custom map markers can be created and dropped onto the map to indicate the location of key aspects of the facility (such as hydrant locations, key boxes, or stairwells). Asset, Event, Incident, and Threat Stream data can all be viewed and filtered on the location map now. These changes enable the location map to be used for greater situational awareness and understanding of the facility. Further, updates made here will serve as the basis for updates to the Map app in 2022.
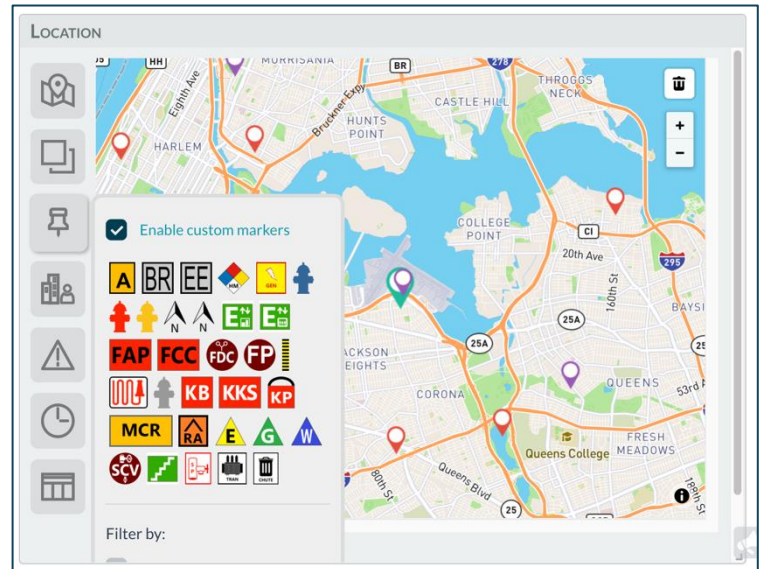
Other improvements include implementation of the new terrorism risk model. While not yet visible to users, the updates made here have allowed our team to test risk functionality in advance of the rollout to users. This functionality is expected to be made available to users in the coming months.

The Haystax engineering team also made copious but smaller usability enhancements to Cal COP in recent system updates. This includes adding an auto save feature on assessments, increasing assessment print options, and adding new training videos in Help content.

Recent mobile updates included making new browser version features visible in the mobile app, as well as usability improvements.

For more detail about recent system updates, please see calcop.org or reach out to your Haystax project manager.

Please Join Us in Welcoming Amy Parish to Our Staff!

Amy Parish joins the Haystax team as Senior Business Analyst, supporting Cal COP and other state and local customers. Amy brings 22 years of law enforcement experience to our team. She was most recently assigned to the Tampa Bay Regional Intelligence Center, where she conducted analyses and research in support of public safety agencies.

Amy is an Open-Source Intelligence Instructor and has designed and implemented numerous analytical products and cybersecurity tools and processes. She has organized large-scale operations involving multiple agencies and presented at multiple conferences. Amy lends subject matter expertise to critical infrastructure assessments and interdependency analysis.