

## What is a GIS?

*How can GIS help you run your business more efficiently?*

A Geographic Information System (GIS) is, quite simply, a tool for displaying and analyzing crucial information as it relates to a geographic location.

If you've ever scribbled notes on a map, added data annotations to a mapping software program, or even maintained a database that contains location information such as addresses, you've created a simple GIS. Full-featured GIS programs such as XMap 7 GIS Editor provide a quantum leap in efficiency, delivering the ability to organize, query, and analyze your data, and to ascertain the answers you need for swift response and informed decision making.



### How is a GIS Created?

Typically, a GIS is created by gathering all available and appropriate data layers and overlaying them on a base map for a given area. This data may be derived from field-collected GPS information, an existing database, a list of objects with a known location such as an address, published GIS data layers, or by using object drawing and attribution tools within the GIS software.

When these data layers are in place, they provide a visual perspective that can help answer your fundamental business questions. For example: Which of my industrial assets are adjacent to wetlands? Are there specific areas of the state that have seen more cases of West Nile Virus? Which homes or businesses are not within the range of a fire hydrant? How do recent development proposals relate to the location of schools, hospitals or businesses?

### Making GIS Accessible

Until recently, the cost of a full-featured GIS was prohibitive. Between software, labor costs and training investment, many businesses and organizations simply couldn't justify the expense. Today, software and mapping companies like DeLorme are developing GIS products that can run on standard desktop or laptop computers using mainstream database technology with minimal maintenance and training required.

GIS provides significant benefits to countless types of users. These benefits include:

- Providing the necessary information to help with business planning strategy
- Maintaining a spatial database of physical assets that can be easily updated as needed
- Overlaying publicly available GIS data layers to provide a more complete perspective of your business data
- Communicating or sharing maps and spatial data with constituents or clients
- Efficiently deploying work crews with real-time GPS locating and navigation capabilities

There is no question that an affordable, efficient GIS can actually save what your business or organization cannot afford to lose: money.

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