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## **GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION SERVICES DIVISION RECEIVES G. HERBERT STOUT AWARD**

NEWTON, NC – Catawba County’s Geospatial Information Services (GIS) division, part of the County’s Information Technology department, recently received the G. Herbert Stout Award at this year’s annual North Carolina GIS Conference. The award was conferred for the development of an emergency response vehicle dispatch simulation in collaboration with Catawba County Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

Staff were recognized for the achievement by the Board of Commissioners during its April 3, 2017 meeting.

Catawba County EMS strives to achieve an average response time of under eight minutes in order to maximize success rates. To accomplish this, finite EMS resources must be allocated as efficiently as possible. Determining future needs can be especially difficult when multiple variables – including vehicle locations, vehicle availability, traffic conditions, and call volume – can alter response scenarios at any given time. Catawba County EMS needed a way to effectively predict resource needs on an annual basis.

To solve this problem, the County’s GIS division created a custom simulation application for EMS based on actual Catawba County EMS response data. The simulation enables EMS staff to proactively analyze different scenarios in response to changes in call volume and resource availability, which helps determine where response gaps could occur. This analysis is then used when preparing resource requests during the County’s annual budget process.

GIS used in-house technology to develop the program, saving upwards of \$250,000 by avoiding the need to purchase retail simulation software. The development process took approximately one year.

“This system has been a game-changer for EMS,” said Catawba County Emergency Services Director Bryan Blanton. “By predicting our resource needs with a much higher degree of accuracy, we are able to assure efficient response times that will continue to meet the needs of our citizens as effectively as possible.”

The G. Herbert Stout Award was created to recognize visionary use of geographic information systems (GIS) by local governments in North Carolina. The award, which is only given to one county government and one city or town government each year, has been presented at the North Carolina GIS annual conference since 1993. To earn the award, a local government entity must demonstrate the development of a GIS application that illustrates one of more of the following: improved efficiency, cost reduction, increased productivity, innovation, or problem solving and must also show the benefits of GIS.

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**PHOTO CAPTION:** The Catawba County GIS team is honored with the G. Herbert Stout Award by Tim Johnson, Director, Center for Geographic Information & Analysis. Pictured L-R: GIS team members Renee Hart, Greta Bumgarner, Ralph Dell, Kate Sturgeon, Michelle Dees, and Arjun Dongre with Tim Johnson.

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