

Panasonic



TOUGHBOOK

As part of a major program to improve response time, the New Zealand Automobile Association recently purchased over 170 Panasonic Toughbook CF-18s to outfit all its Road Service vehicles with the latest in mobile service technology.

Case Study

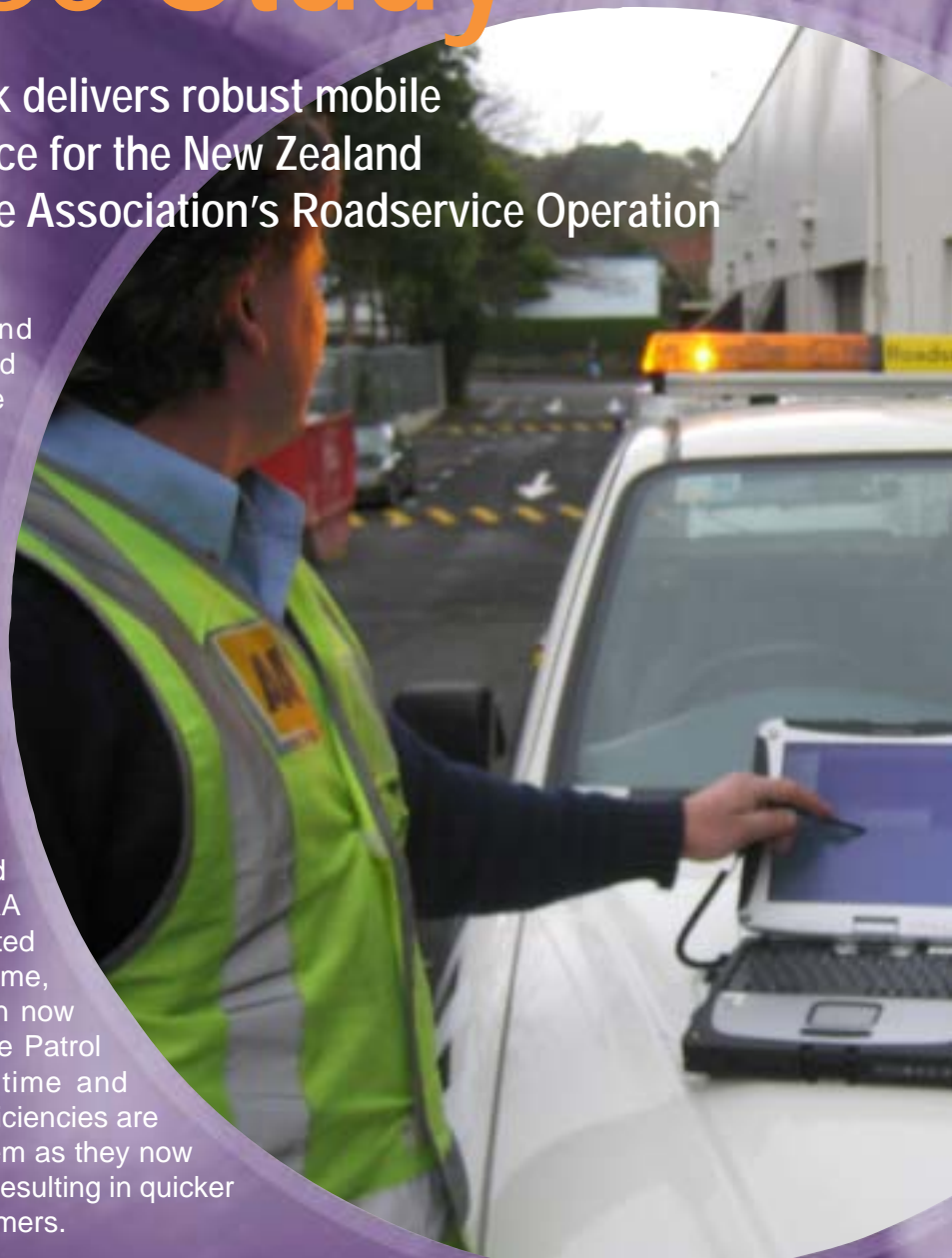
Toughbook delivers robust mobile performance for the New Zealand Automobile Association's Roadservice Operation

In June 2002, The New Zealand Automobile Association Incorporated ("AA") embarked on a project to upgrade its roadside mobile data terminals to a world-class mobile field service solution. As part of this project to transform AA's infrastructure, a superior notebook solution was sought that would stand up to the rigours of field use.

Dramatic Improvements in Efficiency

"Panasonic CF-18 Toughbooks have completely streamlined the way in which the AA does business," explained Paul Wykes — IT Project Manager for AA Roadservice. "Previously, we were limited to the dispatching of jobs one at a time, however with new technology we can now deliver up to twelve jobs directly to the Patrol resulting in better management of time and resources at the roadside." Further efficiencies are gained through the GPS tracking system as they now know precisely where each vehicle is, resulting in quicker response times to Members and customers.

As the leading vehicle breakdown service provider in New Zealand, the AA provides breakdown assistance across the entire country with diverse temperature and geographical conditions. The association currently serves over 1 million Members and attends to over 500,000 call outs per year, many of which are particularly challenging given variable weather conditions, inferior roads and heavy traffic. With an operation of such size and scale, continuous and efficient communications between their call centre and their mobile units is critical.





Tough Requirements

Rough road conditions and variable weather meant that any solution introduced had to be robust, resilient and reliable in a vehicle-mounted environment. The equipment would also have to perform through long periods of use to meet the demands of a 24/7/365 service, and be easy to navigate in bright daylight or in the dark.

The Panasonic Toughbook CF-18 met and exceeded these tough requirements. The AA was particularly sold on the daylight-readable touchscreen. In addition, the magnesium alloy case and the shock-mounted hard disk drive allowed the units to be locked in a theft-proof metal vehicle mount and still withstand the constant shock and vibration from a moving vehicle.

The CF-18 is designed to operate in extreme conditions as cold as -20 degrees Celsius and as such the units are able to withstand the environments that AA service officers experience in the southernmost centres like Dunedin and Invercargill.



Exceeding Expectations

The CF-18 simplifies processes across the board saving a lot of paperwork and making the flow of administrative tasks easier. Reports can be produced on demand, correspondence is now done by email and is instantaneous. Motorists wanting to renew their membership, or subscribe to other AA services can get all the information they require at the side of the road, without the need to visit an AA Centre.

For the future, the AA is looking to set up on-board vehicle diagnostics. This will enable them to maintain their world-class roadside mobilization rate of over 93% of all breakdowns despite the increasing sophistication of modern cars.

“Having an on-board diagnostic service will enable AA service officers to establish the reason for the breakdown at the roadside, email details directly to the dealer network and potentially arrange for the ordering of parts.” explains Wykes.

“All of this is a result of our decision to install Panasonic CF-18 Toughbooks. Their functionality has enabled us to work smarter and more efficiently in providing excellent customer service. This has in turn given the AA the ability to grow by extending the range of services we are able to provide.”

An Award-Winning Accomplishment

For the execution and delivery of this project, AA won Computerworld Excellence Awards in both the categories it was nominated in. These highly coveted awards are given annually to recognise excellence in the IT industry in New Zealand. As David Van Kampen — National Manager for AA Road Service states, “The AA is particularly pleased and proud to receive the top ‘IT’ awards in the ‘Mobile Workforce’ and ‘Customer Service’ categories. While many people were involved, we could not have delivered what we have without the great product and service provided by the team at Panasonic [MEC Distributors].”



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