

The Trimble Recon X-Series Computer

Written by Kevin Gordon

At the IACP convention in September 2006, Trimble introduced the combination of T-Ticket™ mobile citation software with the Trimble Recon® handheld computer. Recently Trimble released the new "rugged" Trimble Recon X-Series handheld computer. The term rugged is a great understatement. This handheld PDA has to be seen and held to be appreciated!

I picked one up on a trial basis and found it was everything I expected. It was simple to use and simple to learn with a screen that is easy to read. It fits well in the hand and feels like you don't have to "baby" it as you would with other units. You can actually feel the ruggedness.

First, consider the size and weight of this unit. This handheld PC measures 6.5 x 3.8 x 1.8 inches and weighs a mere 17 ounces. It is lightweight and very easy to carry. In my world, that means I'll probably be dropping it a lot, through no fault of the unit. But it can take it, after all, a unit made to be used in the field has to be able to cope with the field. This Recon X-Series fits that bill as it meets military standards (MIL-STD-810F) for vibrations, drops, heat, cold, humidity, and altitude, and it is waterproof and dustproof. That pretty much covers any abuse we can give it!

The Recon and its round edges feels very comfortable in the hand. Operating temperature runs from an incredible -22 to 140 deg F. In other words, it works when you do. The storage temperature of the unit is even greater running from -40 to 158 deg F. If water is an issue, the Recon can withstand immersion up to 1 meter for 30 minutes. Certainly enough for any accidental drop in the puddle. The true rugged nature of the unit is apparent when you consider how shockproof it is. It is rated to handle 26 drops from 4 feet onto plywood over concrete! In addition, it is rated for 6 drops at -22 degrees and an additional 6 drops at 140 degree F.

A promotional online video shows the Recon being dropped in normal work situations, including falling off the back of a vehicle, being run over in a field, dropped by a electric line worker or down the stairs of a sports stadium, repeatedly bouncing off the concrete steps.

Every example presented is one that could easily happen in a real work environment (with the exception of the unit being placed in a paint mixer, but that certainly got the point across). Quite simply, the Recon can handle the daily abuse employees can give it and most certainly can handle the typical drop off the squad seat or onto the pavement as you step from the squad or the slip from your hand in inclement weather.

The Recon's standard features include Windows Mobile® 5.0, the latest version of Microsoft's software for handheld devices, either 200 or 400 MHz Intel processor, 64 MB high-speed SDRAM, 128 MB or 256 MB nonvolatile Flash storage, touch screen, sunlight-readable color display, integrated speaker and microphone, 15 hours of continuous room-temperature operation with default settings and optional integrated Bluetooth, and 802.11g wireless capability. The Bluetooth wireless lets the user connect while in the field to local area networks, e-mail and the Internet.

The all-day batteries ensure the unit works your entire shift. The Recon isn't just a rugged PDA to keep your calendar and contacts in but can fill many job functions. The Portland, OR Police are among a variety of police agencies that use the Trimble Recon and the mobile ticketing software to issue traffic tickets. The Denver Fire Department uses them while completing fire inspections, and the U.S. Navy uses them in cargo management.

The handheld computers are easy to use and easy to learn and permit officers to perform their duties quickly and efficiently. A handheld computer can often be used in places where a laptop isn't feasible or handy, including areas such as bike patrol, motorcycle patrol and non-traditional patrol such as Segways and T3s.

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