



SimSuite

Frequently Asked Questions



US Army Corps
of Engineers
BUILDING STRONG®

A product of the Readiness Support Center

Contents

<i>General Questions</i>	3
What is SimSuite?.....	3
Where do you get your data?	3
<i>Using the Basic Map Options</i>	4
How do I navigate the map?	4
How do I access the map legend?	4
How do I turn on and off layers?	4
Why are some layers unavailable or not loading (red exclamation icon)?.....	6
Why aren't all layers clickable with an information window?	6
Why do some layers take longer to load than others?	6
How do I switch what kind of map is in the background?	6
How do I adjust layer opacity?	7
How do I export kmzs?	7
How do I change the banner to see my organization's name?	7
<i>Using The Tools</i>	8
How do I search features?	8
How do I apply a filter to my area of interest?	9
How do I make a map?	10
How do I see real time events?	10
How do I see modeled scenarios?	11
How do I save a map to my favorites so that I can see it again? How can I send someone else a link so they can view exactly what I am viewing? How do I bookmark a view so I can come back to it later?	11
How do I add my own data?	11
How can I see Corps-centric mission modeling for hurricane-prone areas?	12
How can I draw on the map?	13
How do I see a street view?	13
How do I check an elevation profile?	14
How can I see features in just one state/USACE district/division/FEMA region/Congressional District?	14
How can I see what PRTs are deployed or are ready to deploy?	15
How do I identify something on the map?	16
How can I see military installations?	16

General Questions

What is SimSuite?

SimSuite is an application built by the US Army Corps of Engineers Readiness Support Center as a way to remedy the scattershot information relevant to the Emergency Management community during the entire EM lifecycle, from planning and preparation to response and through recovery and mitigation.

SimSuite is a GIS-based viewer and platform that merges outside resources and data with internal information into a single common operating picture. In addition, it's a completely customizable, allowing users to push and pull their own data to and from SimSuite and combine a variety of elements into a single view to meet their needs. SimSuite can be thought of in three distinct yet seamless parts analogous to the phases of emergency management: planning, response, and recovery.

The planning aspect takes shape as four separate, event-specific applications. Hurricane modeling is available in SimStorm, while flood modeling is available in SimFlood. SimQuake provides earthquake modeling. Future development will also include SimTerror, which will simulate terrorist events around the world. Each application has a growing number of already modeled scenarios, allowing users to select an event and use the scenario and associated data for planning purposes.

For the response and recovery portions, SimSuite combines custom-built tools, layers, and user-driven elements into a single common operating picture during an actual event. It provides a cross-functional platform for data and information accessible across agencies and organizations.

Of course, all of the layers that are available in the planning portion of the application through the modeled scenarios are also available in the SimSuite operational viewer. But the crucial difference between SimSuite and other viewers is that it combines outside resources such as Google, Bing, social media feeds, and other real-time data feeds with internal data into a single platform for the user. Anyone can do a Google web search for hospitals and gas stations near a specific ZIP code, for example. But through SimSuite, the user can search for hospitals within a user-specified radius from a point on the map, and see that information spatially returned against a backdrop of other user-specified data. Users can ask SimSuite intelligent questions, and SimSuite will return the answers within one viewer, rather than consulting four web searches in four different browser windows.

Where do you get your data?

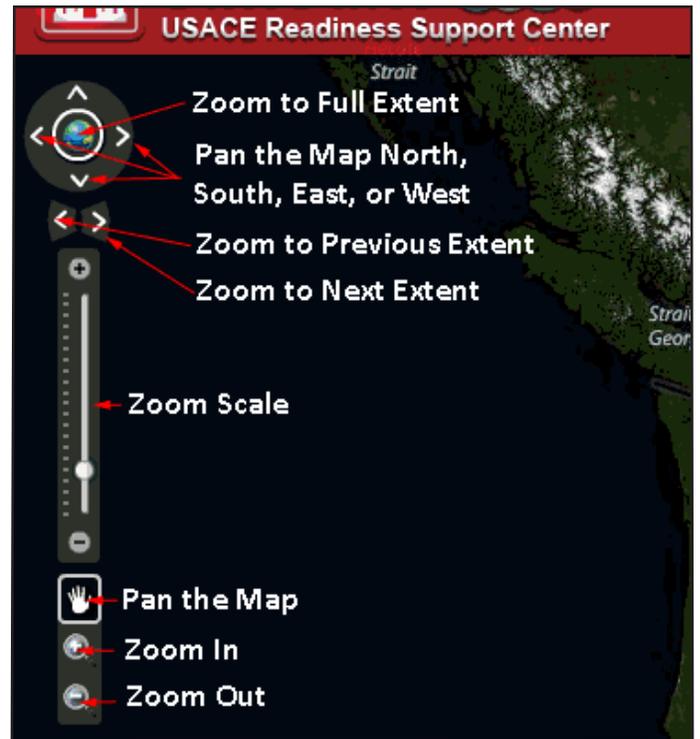
SimSuite uses a variety of data sources within its applications. Many layers are provided via web services and outside state and Federal agencies, including NOAA, the EPA, and the USGS, to name a few. Data is also pulled from HSIP (Homeland Security – Infrastructure Program) Gold, which is updated annually. Real time data, is of course, updated in real time as those services are updated. Corps Mission Modeling data is based on the latest and most scientifically valid modeling methodology.

Using the Basic Map Options

How do I navigate the map?

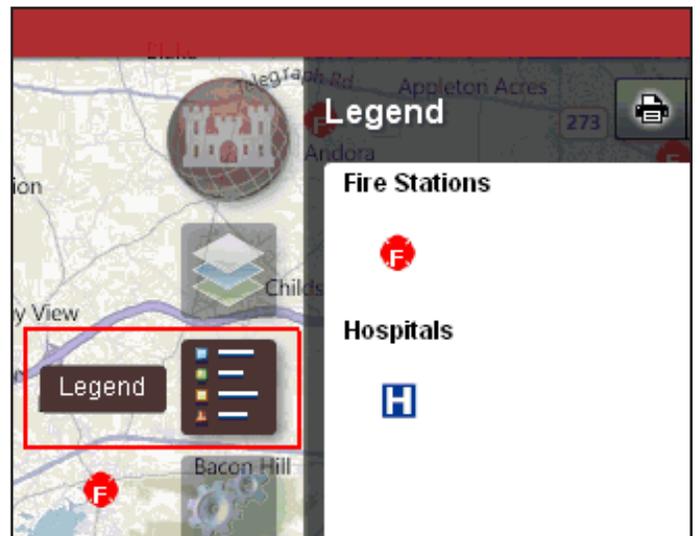
Navigation tools common to most GIS applications and mapping software are also used within SimSuite. The primary navigation bar is located on the left side of the main SimSuite window. See the image to identify each navigation feature within the bar.

There are several other ways to zoom in and out of the map in addition to the zoom tools available in the navigation bar. You can double click anywhere on the map to zoom in closer. You can also use your mouse wheel to zoom in or out of the map. Move the wheel forward to zoom in and backward to zoom out.



How do I access the map legend?

The map legend is located on the right side panel of the main SimSuite window. Click on the legend icon to open the panel and see the legend associated with any layers you have currently turned on. The legend will appear blank if you have not turned any layers on, or if a particular service or layer that you have turned on is working incorrectly. Sometimes this happens because the services that SimSuite uses are external to our application and they aren't working on the host site. For example, if the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) servers are down, the associated legend items will not display in the legend window.



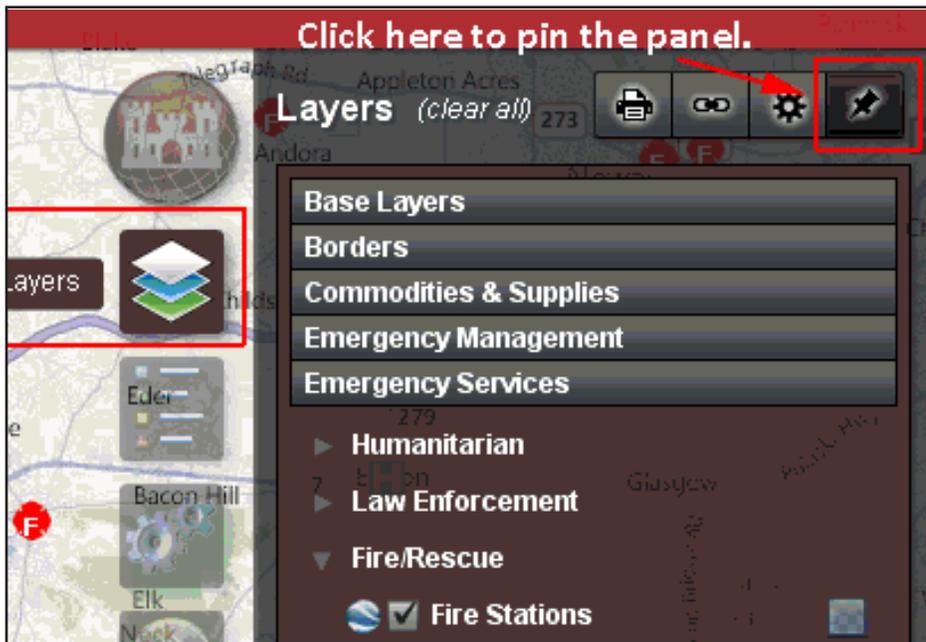
How do I turn on and off layers?

SimSuite offers several dozen layers for enhanced user control and customization. The layers panel is on the right side of the screen. Click the layers icon to open the panel. If you wish, you can pin the panel in place so it remains open even when you move your mouse off of it.

Please remember that some layers, like hospitals or fire stations, for example, will not show up if you are zoomed very far out, for instance if you are looking at a map of the entire United States. There are simply too many results that would return. If this is the case, then

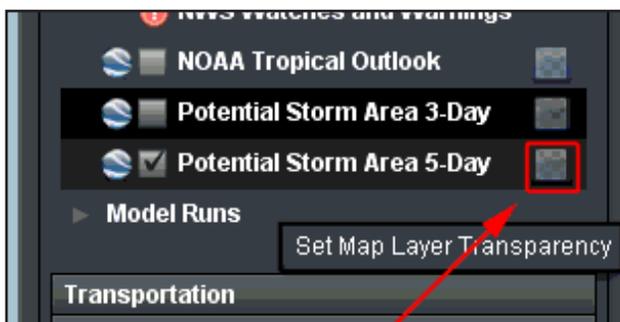


the layer name will be italicized, and you will not be able to click them. Zoom in to an area until the desired layer name appears as regular text, that is, does not appear italicized, and becomes clickable. If the icons still don't appear when you are zoomed in to an area, it could be because that service is down, or because there are simply no matching results in that area.

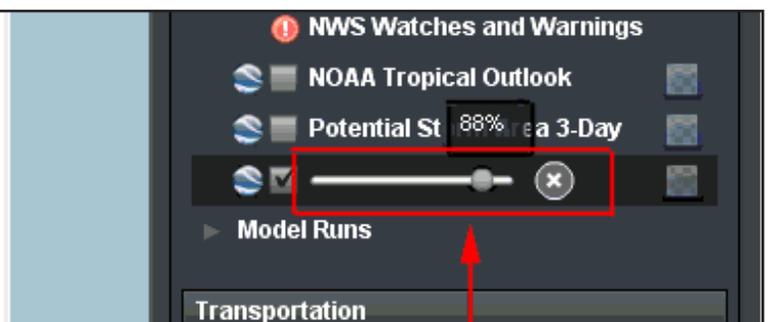


Click the layer category name to open that set of layers. Click the triangle icon next to the category subheads to see the associated individual layers. Click the open check box next to the layer name to turn the layer on, and uncheck the box to turn the layer off.

The box to the far right of the layer name controls the layer transparency. Click that box if you want to increase or decrease the opacity of that layer. A slide rule will open, and you can move the circle within the rule to your desired layer transparency percentage. Click the x icon to close the layer transparency option and see the layer name again.



Click this box first.



Use the slide rule to set the transparency.

The circle icon to the left of the layer name allows you to export a kmz file of that layer and save it to your machine, or open that layer within Google Earth, if you have that application installed on your machine. Select the icon to export or open the file with Google Earth and follow the window prompts to save or open the file as needed.



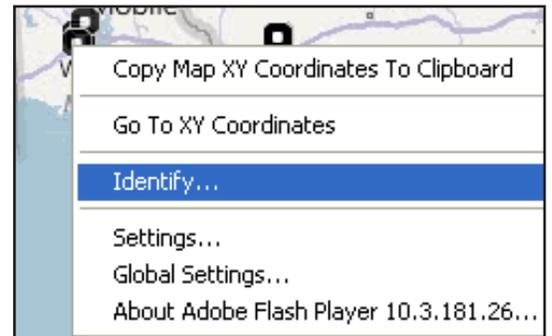
Why are some layers unavailable or not loading (red exclamation icon)?

If you see a red circle with an exclamation point next to a service or layer, that means that particular service or layer is not working incorrectly. Sometimes this happens because the services that SimSuite uses are external to our application and they aren't working on the host site. If the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) servers are down, then that service, and therefore any associated layer, will not work within SimSuite. These problems must be fixed on the host site. Be sure to check back periodically to see if the issue has been remedied.



Why aren't all layers clickable with an information window?

SimSuite is an evolving application and development is an ongoing process. We are in the process of making every icon within every layer clickable with an information window, and this will be available to a greater extent in future releases of SimSuite. In the meantime, if an icon isn't clickable, you can always try to identify it using the right click method. Right click on any feature, point, or layer and select Identify from the menu that appears. This will also open a dialog box with more information about that particular feature, point, or layer.



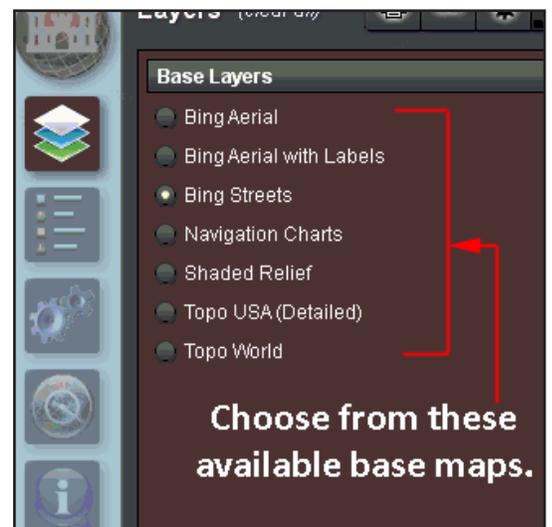
Why do some layers take longer to load than others?

There's a lot of data in some layers, and that can take a minute or two to load into SimSuite since web services are being called on the fly, not housed within the application. Layers displaying large services have many features, and in turn take a little longer to load than those with fewer features.

Also, some layers will only appear when you are zoomed in to the map to a close extent. You will not be able to see fire stations, for example, if you are zoomed out to the entire contiguous United States. When in doubt, zoom in closer to see if the layers load at a closer extent.

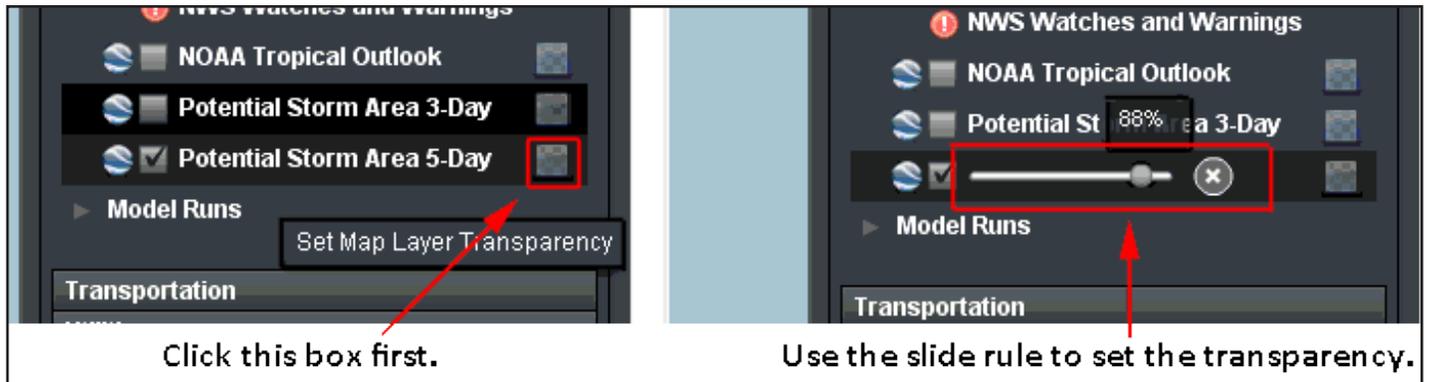
How do I switch what kind of map is in the background?

You can switch the base map, or the map that is in the background, at any time during your SimSuite session. Select the Layers icon from the right side panel and then select the Base layers bar. Click on the desired type of map you wish to see, whether it's aerial, streets, navigation charts, shaded relief, or topographic maps. The base map will change once you click the button next to the name of the base map you wish to view.



How do I adjust layer opacity?

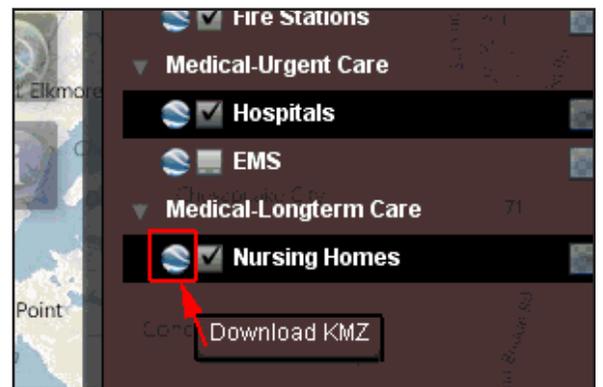
Open the layers panel and go to the layer for which you want to adjust layer opacity. The box to the far right of the layer name controls the layer transparency. Click that box if you want to increase or decrease the opacity of that layer. A slide rule will open, and you can move the circle within the rule to your desired layer transparency percentage. Click the x icon to close the layer transparency option and see the layer name again.



How do I export kmzs?

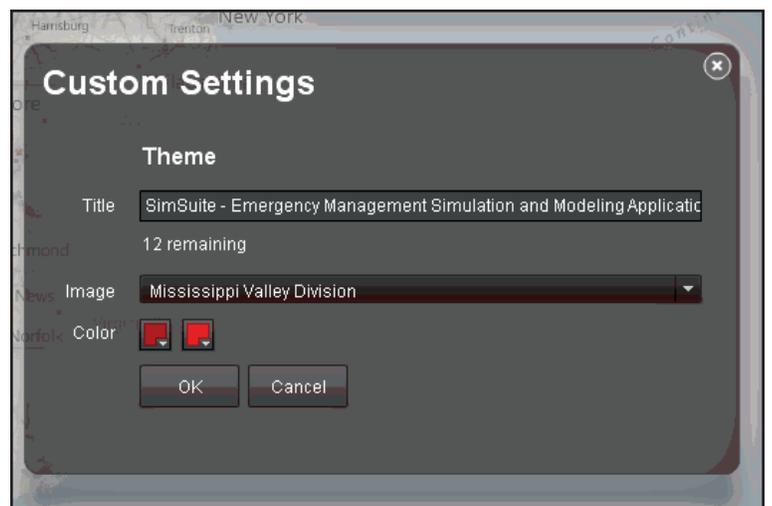
SimSuite allows you to export a kmz file of a particular layer and save it to your machine, or open that layer within Google Earth, if you have that application installed on your machine.

Open the layers panel and go to the layer for which you want to export a kmz file. Click the circle icon to the left of the layer name to export or open the file with Google Earth and follow the window prompts to save or open the file as needed.



How do I change the banner to see my organization's name?

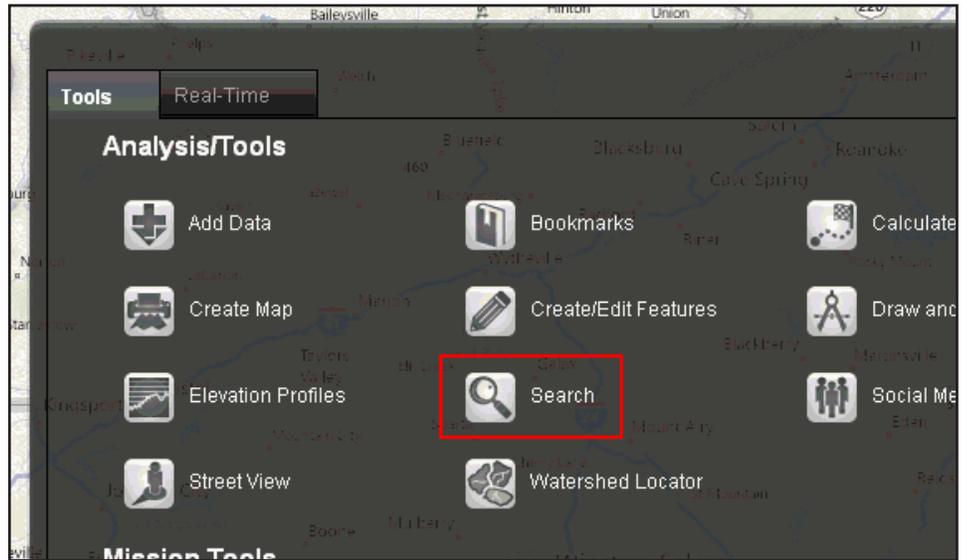
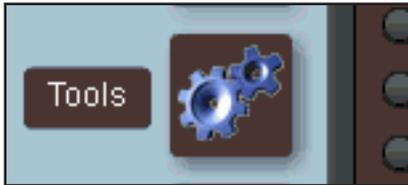
You can change the banner, title, and logo of SimSuite to suite your organization's needs. All Corps districts, and divisions are represented, as well as several other agencies and organizations, including FEMA and the Silver Jackets. Select the custom settings icon from the top of the right side panel. You can customize several settings from here. You can change the title of the application, which appears in the grey bar across the bottom of your screen. You can also change the logo that appears in the upper left corner of the screen, along with the color of the banner across the top of the screen. Select from the available options and follow the prompts to customize SimSuite to fit your organization's needs.



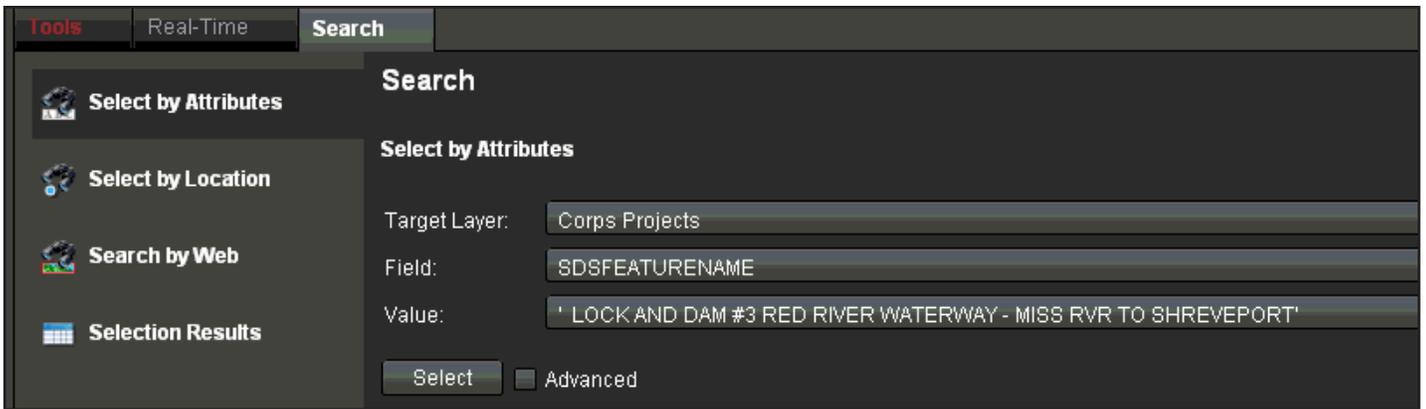
Using The Tools

How do I search features?

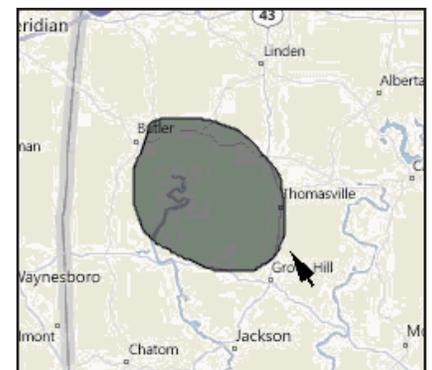
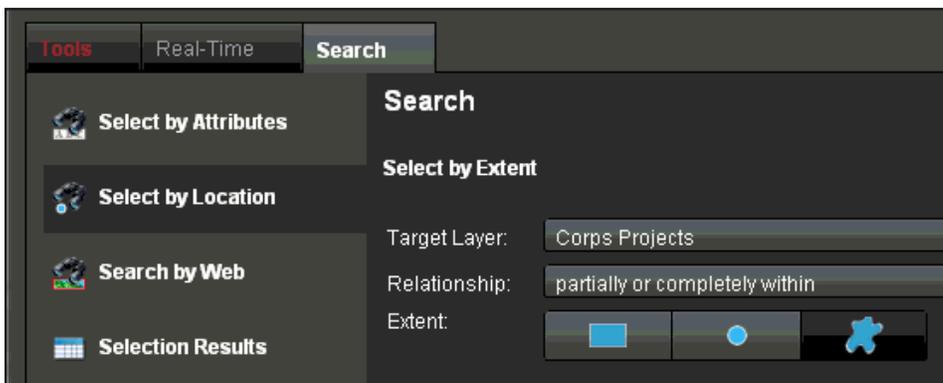
You can search features by attributes, location, or by a simple web search. Click the tools icon and open the tools box. Select search to open the search tab.



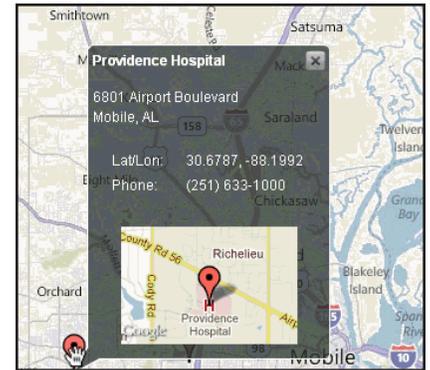
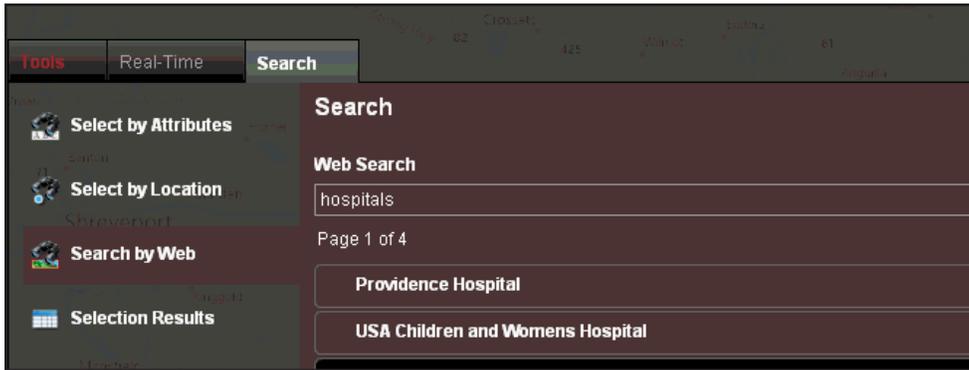
To search by attributes, select Search by Attributes. Use the dropdown menu to select a target layer, then use the next dropdown menu to select a field. Select a value from the next dropdown menu, then click Select. The attributes that meet your criteria will populate the map. You can click on any of the results to see more information, or to zoom to that location.



To search by location, select Search by Location. Select a target layer from the dropdown menu, then select a relationship from the next dropdown menu. To select a relationship means to select whether you want to search based on how that target layer interacts with the box, circle, or polygon that you will draw. For example, you can search for results partially or completely within the polygon you draw, completely within, partially but not fully within, or fully inside an area. Next select whether you want to draw a box, a circle, or a polygon, and then draw the desired shape on the map. The map will zoom in to the location and show your results.

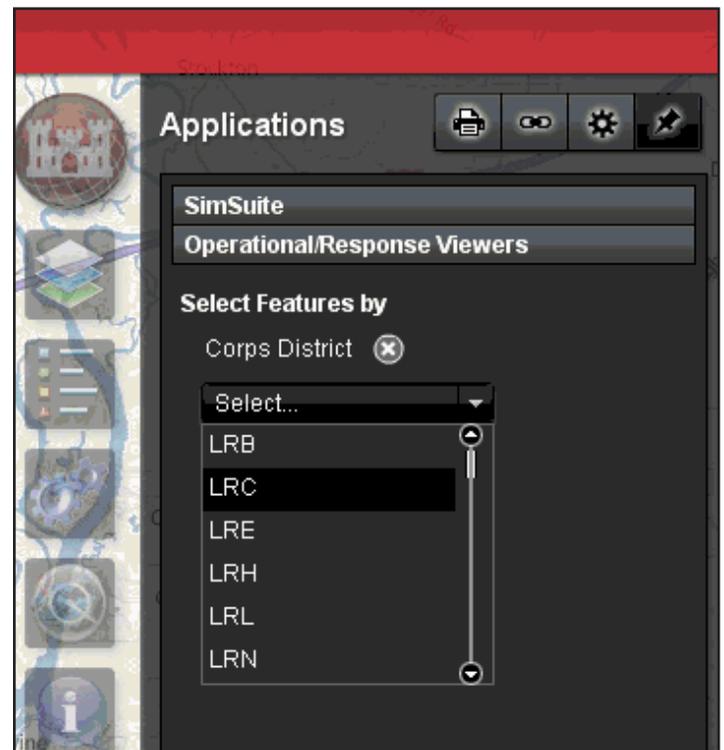
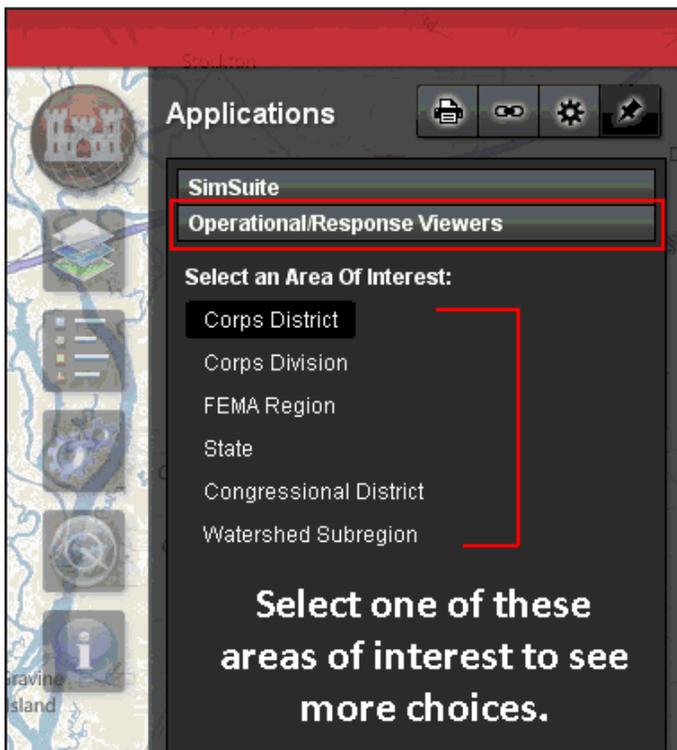
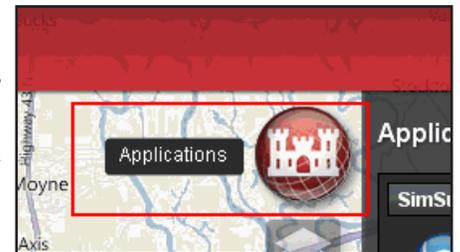


To search by web, select search by web. This feature is just like performing a Google search. Simply type a term, for example, hospitals, ice, landfills, etc., into the search box. Click a point on the map around which you would like to search, then click Search. Your results will be returned and shown both in the Search box and by pinpoints on the map. Select the pinpoints for the latitude, longitude, and contact information for that result. Similarly, you can also hover over the results in the search box to see the associate location on the map, and double click the name in the search box to zoom to that location. It might zoom a bit too close to see an aerial photo of the result, so please zoom out a little if you see a background with icons that look like cameras inside a circle with a slash through it. You should be able to see a map once you zoom out a bit.



How do I apply a filter to my area of interest?

You can zoom to location and filter results according to a number of areas of interest, including by state, FEMA region, USACE district or division, or Congressional District, or watershed subregion. Select the Applications icon from the right side of the screen. Select the Operational/Response Viewers bar toward the bottom of the panel. Select an Area of Interest from the menu, then select your desired filter (state, division, district, etc.) To select a different type of area of interest, click the x icon by the feature name, and the original menu of area of interest choices will return.

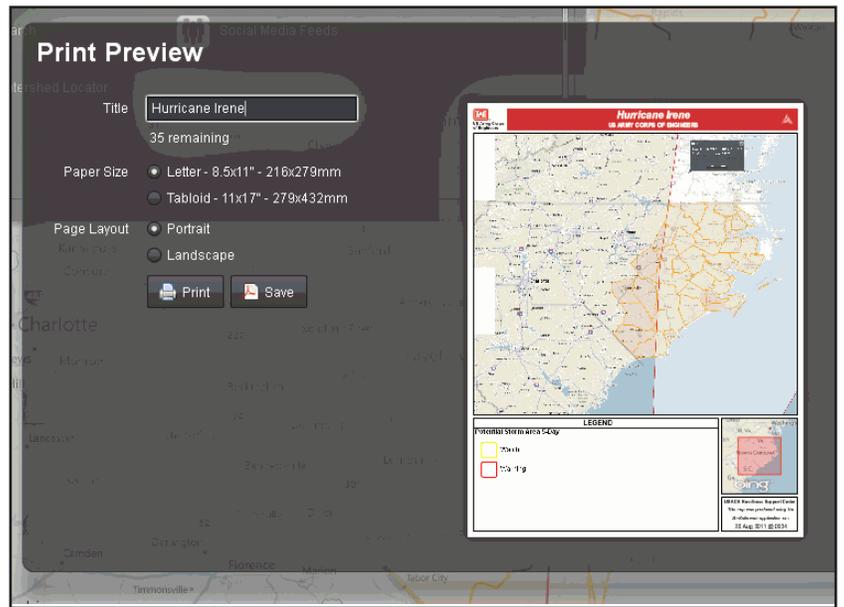
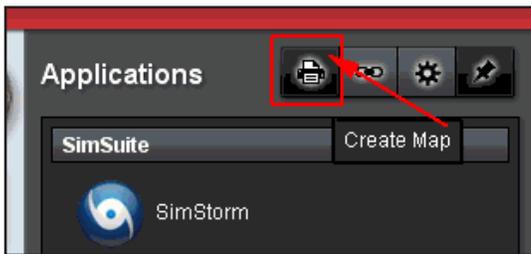
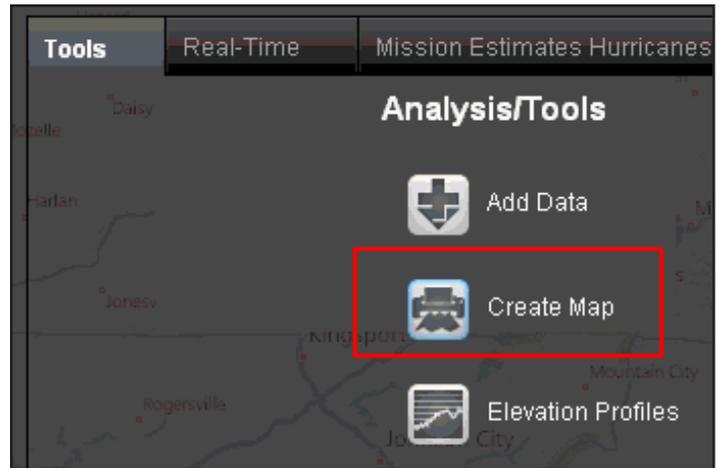


How do I make a map?

SimSuite allows every user to make a professional quality map with minimal effort. Once you have a view of the map that you would like to print, save, or email, you can create a map in two different ways.

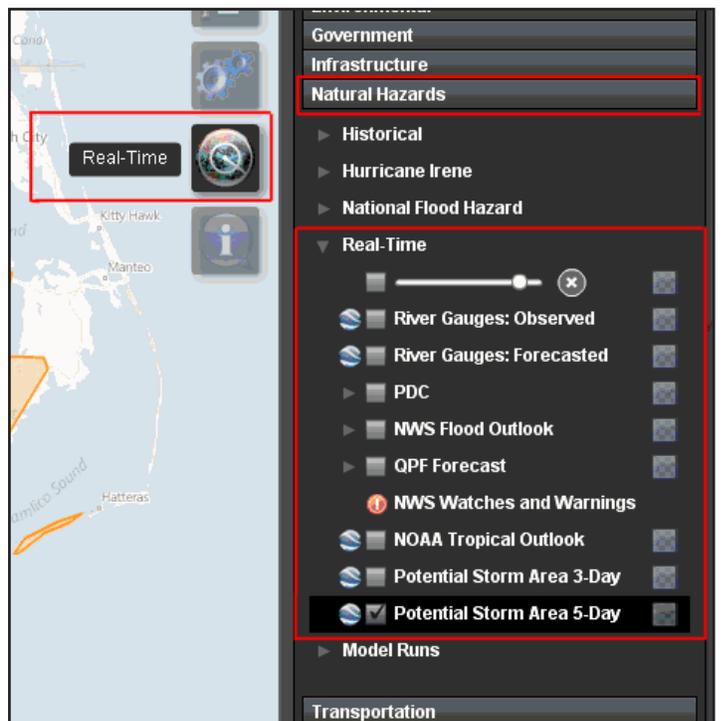
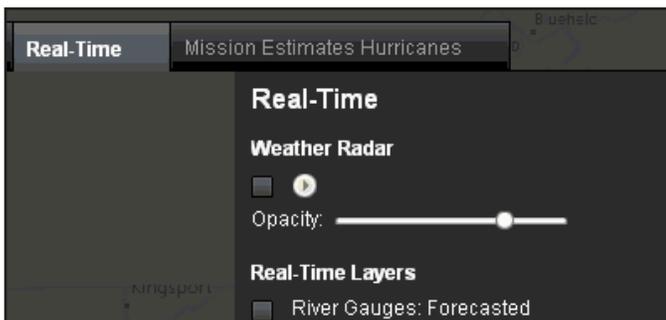
Select the Tools icon. Select the Create Map icon from there. The screen will grey out for a moment, then the print preview window will open. Type in the title of your map, select a paper size and layout option, and choose to either save or print the map. You can save the map and attach it to emails or insert it into a PowerPoint presentation.

You can also select the Create Map icon at the top of the right side panel at any time to get the same results. Again, the screen will grey out for a moment, then the print preview window will open. Type in the title of your map, select a paper size and layout option, and choose to either save or print the map. You can save the map and attach it to emails or insert it into a PowerPoint presentation.



How do I see real time events?

There are a number of real time data layers available through SimSuite. To see real time weather, NOAA watches and warnings, river gauges, and more, select the real time icon from the right side of the screen. Select the check boxes next to the layers you wish to see on the map. You can also select the Real Time layers from the layers panel. Select Layers, then Natural Hazards, then Real Time. The same options are available here.



How do I see modeled scenarios?

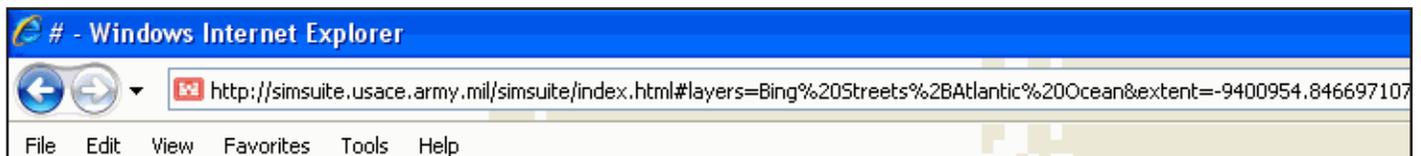
There are several modeled scenarios, including modeled hurricanes, earthquakes, and floods available through SimSuite. To choose a modeled scenario, select the Applications icon from the right side of the screen.

Choose SimStorm to see available hurricane models. Choose SimFlood for modeled flood events and SimQuake for modeled earthquake events. The available models will appear in a new window in the middle of the screen. Select the model you wish to view and the application will open. From there you can use all of the layers, tools, and real time events that are available through the operational viewer portion of SimSuite.



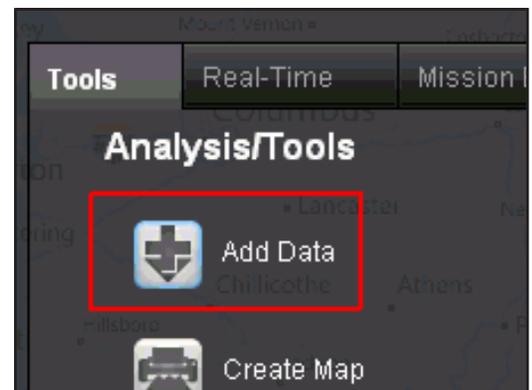
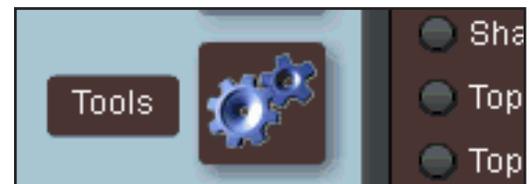
How do I save a map to my favorites so that I can see it again? How can I send someone else a link so they can view exactly what I am viewing? How do I bookmark a view so I can come back to it later?

You can bookmark a view and save it to your favorites or email a link to another person that allows them to view exactly what you are viewing in SimSuite, with all the layers, tools, etc., that you have chosen during a particular session. Select the direct link icon from the top of the right side panel. You'll notice that the URL in your browser bar will change. Simply cut and paste that URL into an email to send your view to someone else or save that URL to your favorites to come back to this view during another SimSuite session.



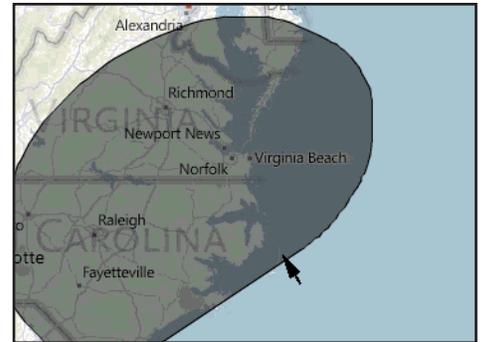
How do I add my own data?

You can easily add your own data, services, or shapefiles to SimSuite, allowing you to view customized data against the available SimSuite layers. Select the Tools icon and then select Add Data. Follow the prompts to add either shapefiles or services.



How can I see Corps-centric mission modeling for hurricane-prone areas?

The entire Gulf Coast and most of the Atlantic seaboard have been modeled for hurricane impacts from a tropical storm through a Category 4 hurricane. Results are available on a county-by-county basis and include estimates for affected populations, number of households, debris, commodities, and blue roofs. Select the tools icon and then Mission Estimates Hurricanes. Choose your region, either the Atlantic ocean or Gulf of Mexico, then choose how you want to draw your boundary extents (either by box or polygon). Draw a box or polygon around the area you wish to query. The polygon tool is precise and a bit strict in its boundaries, so if you receive an error message, please try to draw your polygon again and be sure to close the polygon without any blank areas within it.



SimSuite will return all the counties within your search area. From here, you can click on each county or select the county name from the dropdown menu in the dialog box to view the associated modeled data. Data is available based on storm strength. Click Export to export data for a particular county to an Excel spreadsheet.

SimSuite
USACE Readiness Support Center

Mission Estimates Hurricanes

Search Results
Atlantic Ocean (157) [Clear] [Export]

Hyde, North Carolina

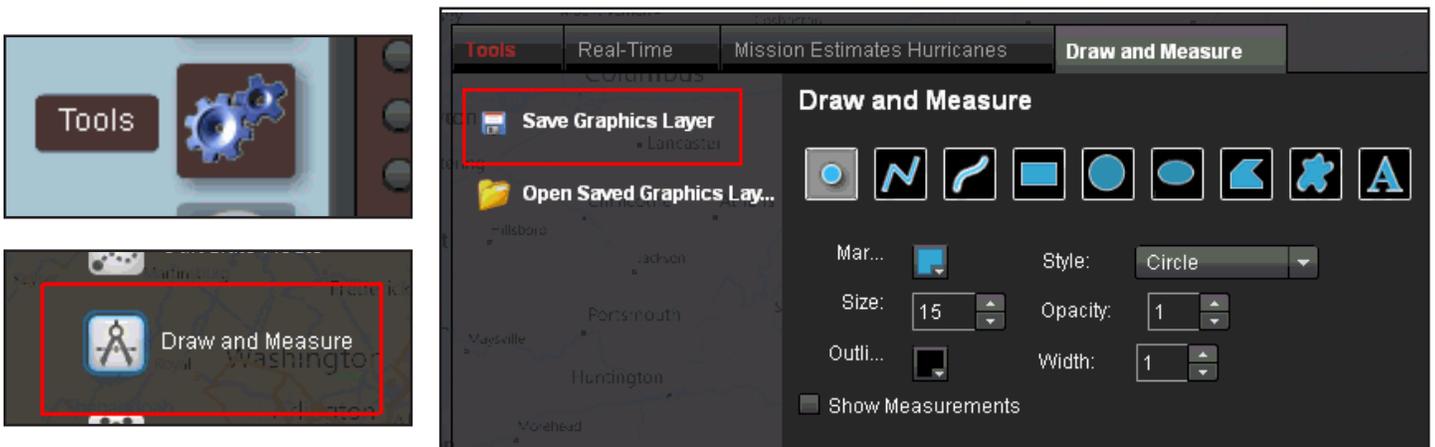
	TS	Cat 1	Cat 2	Cat 3	Cat 4
POPULATIC	5428.00	5428.00	5428.00	5428.00	5428.00
HOUSEHOL	2185.00	2185.00	2185.00	2185.00	2185.00
Debris	1569.33	3794.62	13131.85	35361.38	79024.17
Commodity	1.09	1.09	1.09	1.09	1.09
BlueRoof	87.40	203.21	327.75	415.15	174.80

How can I draw on the map?

You can draw, write, or otherwise mark up the map as you need. Select the Tools icon and then select the Draw and Measure icon. Whatever you draw or write will be saved as a graphics layer. Choose what type of graphic (point, line, circle, polygon, etc.) you wish to use, or select the A icon to write on the map. Choose from the appearance options in the tools box (color, line weight, style, font, etc.) and then click on the map in the desired location to add that drawing or text.

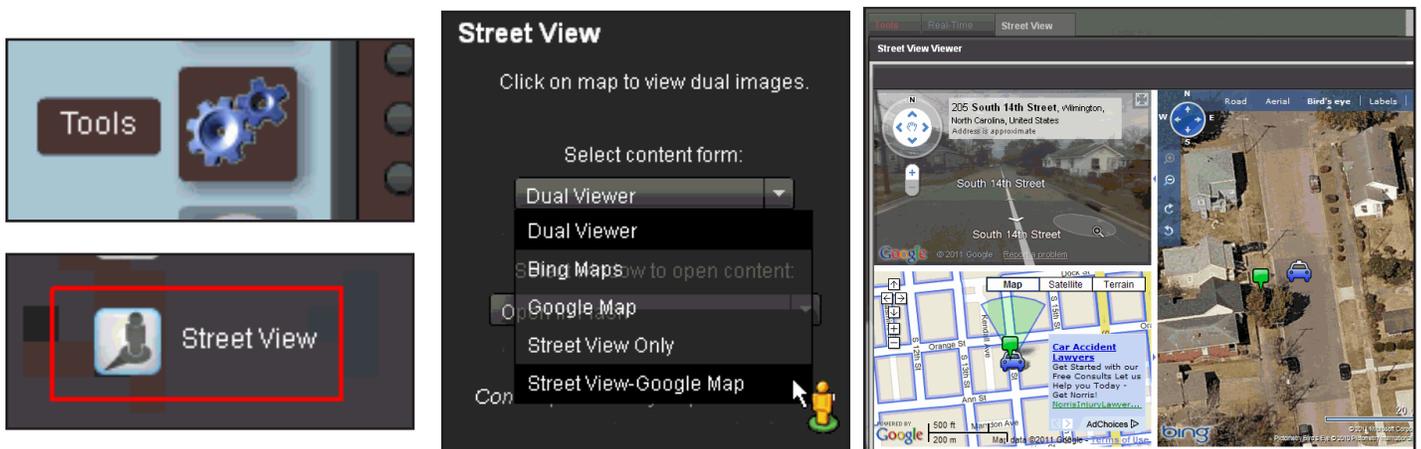
To add more than one graphic element, you will have to choose the type of graphic each time before it can be added to the map. For example, to add two text boxes, you must create and add one text box, then click on the A icon again and enter the text for the second text box and click on the map again to add the second text box.

IMPORTANT NOTE: You MUST click Save Graphics Layer and follow the prompts in the window that opens in order to view your drawings and/or text again. Select Open Saved Graphics Layer to retrieve a previously saved layer. You can also bookmark your view with you graphics layer to come back to it later.



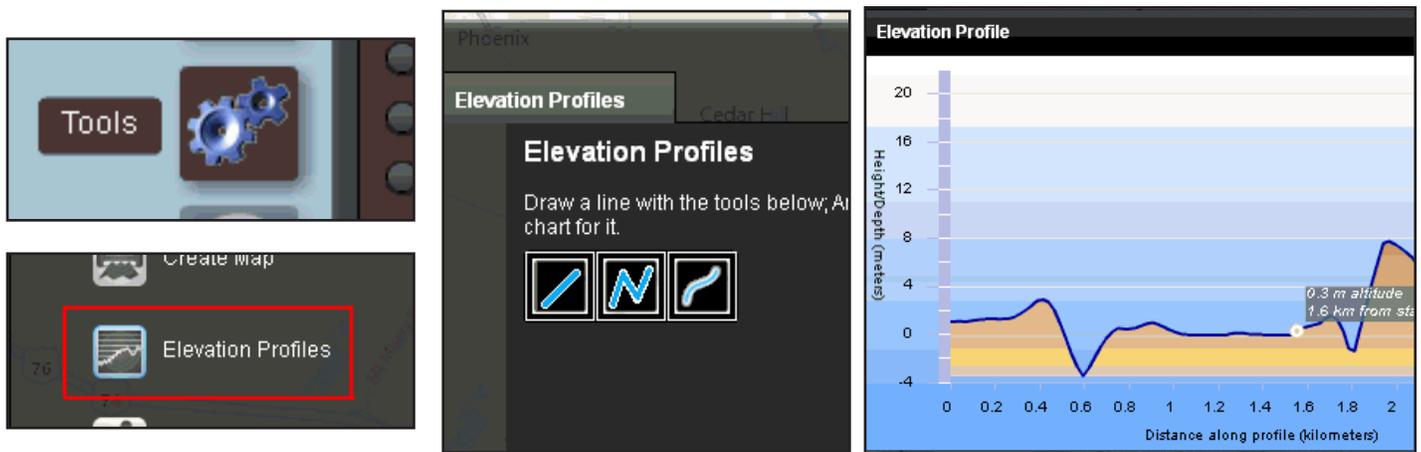
How do I see a street view?

To zoom to a street view anywhere on the map, select the Tools icon from the right side panel then select Street View. Choose that type of view you want to see from the first drop down menu, whether it's Bing Maps, Google Maps, or a dual view of both options. Next, select whether you want the street view to open in a new window or to open in a pop up box via Flash within the browser window you already have open. Now click on the point on the map you wish to see in street view. The map will zoom to that location and open the street view based on the parameters you chose from the dropdown menus.



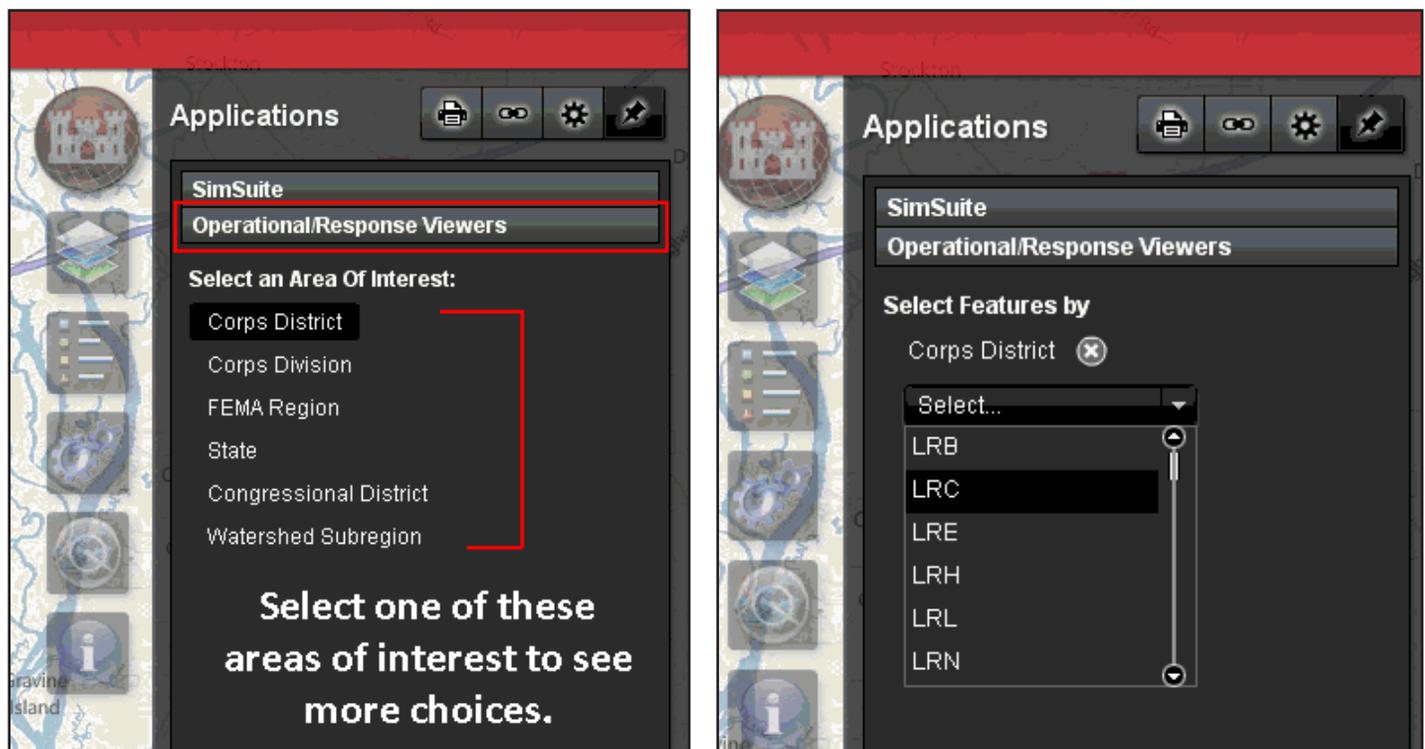
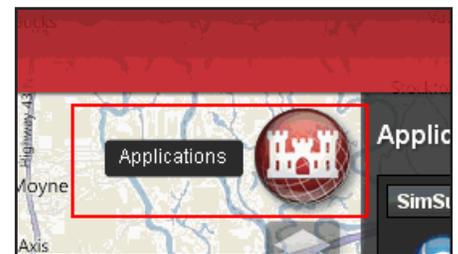
How do I check an elevation profile?

Select the Tools icon and then select the Elevation Profiles icon. Choose the type of line you want to draw across the area for which you want an elevation profile. Draw the line across the area, and the elevation profile graph will open. You can move your cursor along the line graph and see more information about that point, including the exact altitude and the distance that point is from the starting point of your line.



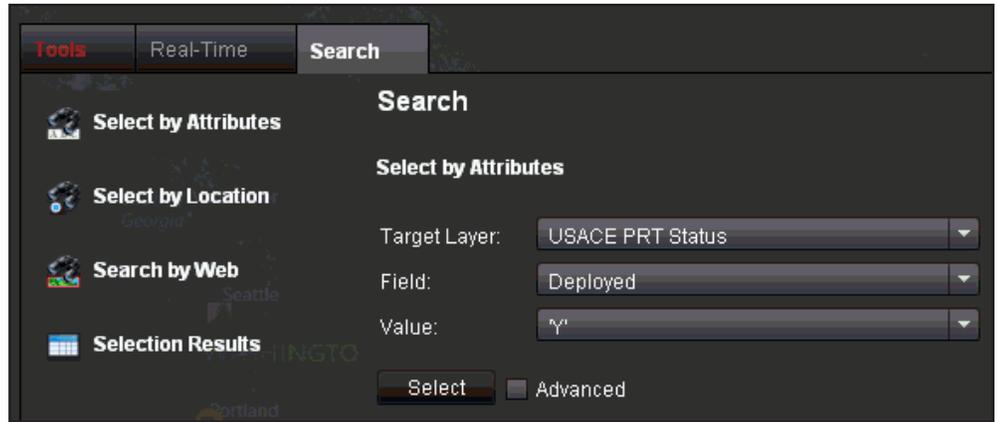
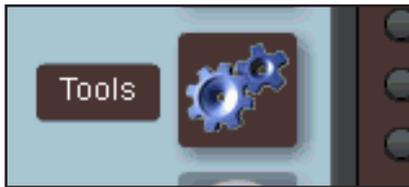
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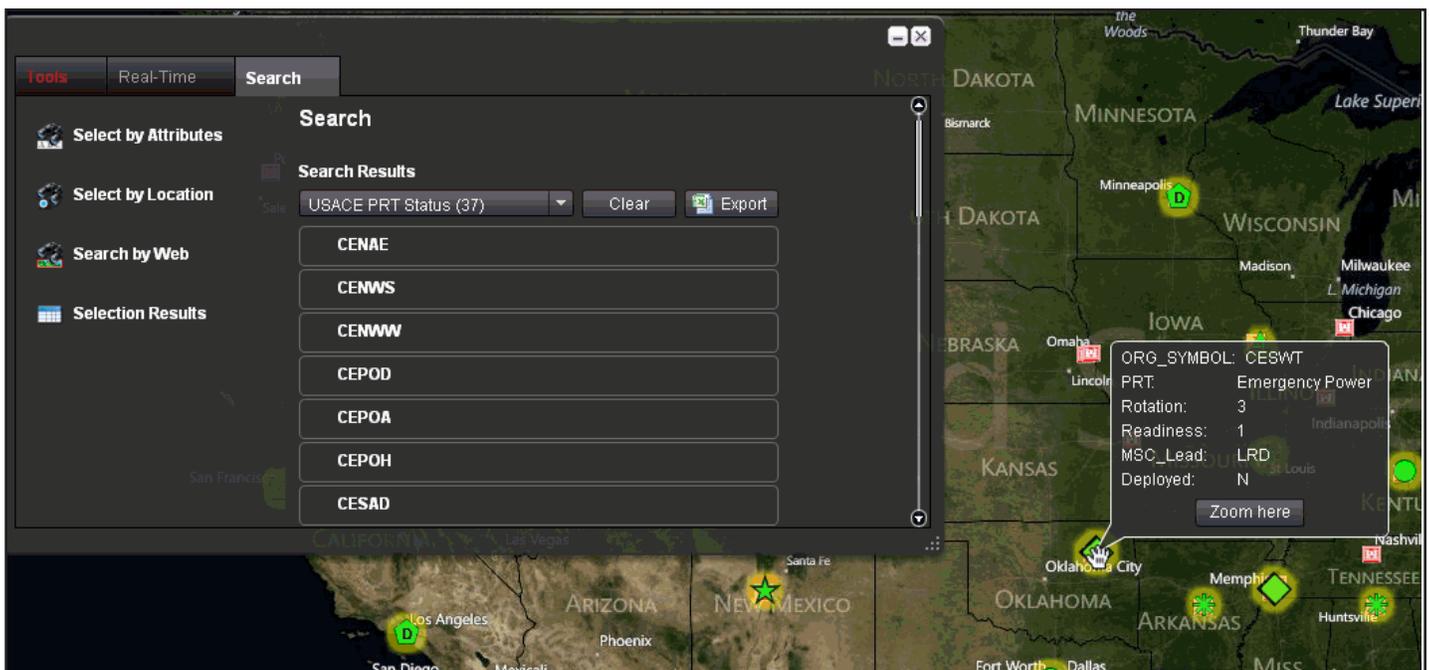


How can I see what PRTs are deployed or are ready to deploy?

You can see the status of all PRTs through SimSuite. Select Tools then Search. Choose Select by Attributes and then choose USACE PRT Status as your target layer. Select the desired field from the field dropdown menu. To see deployed PRTs, for example, scroll down the menu and select Deployed. Select “Y” for the value. Y mean yes and N means no, as in yes, you wish to search on the PRTs that are deployed. Your results will be displayed on the map. Click on any of the icons on the map to see more information. You can also search PRT status based on rotation, readiness, and other fields.

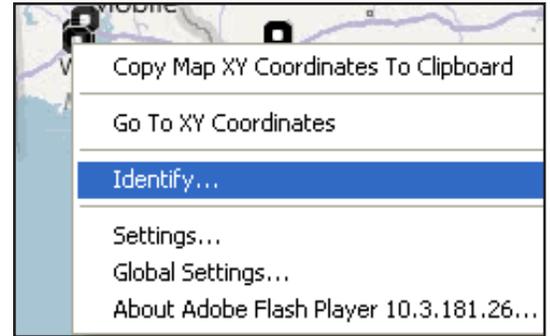


To see the PRTs who are ready to deploy (analogous to being “Green” in ENGLink), choose Select by Attributes and then choose USACE PRT Status as your target layer. Select Readiness from the Field menu, then choose a value. The values 1, 2, and 3, refer to green, amber, and red, respectively. To see all those PRTs who are green in ENGLink and ready to deploy, select 1 as the value, then click Select. Your results will be displayed on the map. Click on any of the icons on the map to see more information.



How do I identify something on the map?

You can simply click on many icons on the map to open a dialog box with more information about that particular feature, point, or layer. You can also right click on any feature, point, or layer and select Identify from the menu that appears. This will also open a dialog box with more information about that particular feature, point, or layer.

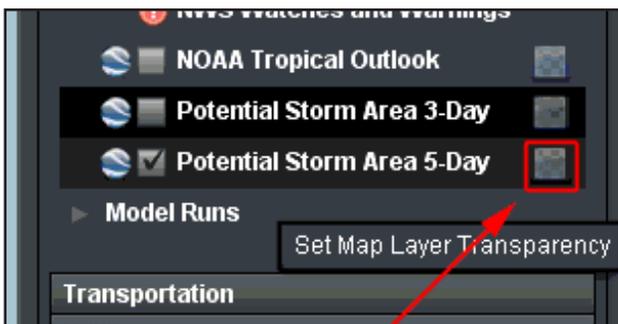


How can I see military installations?

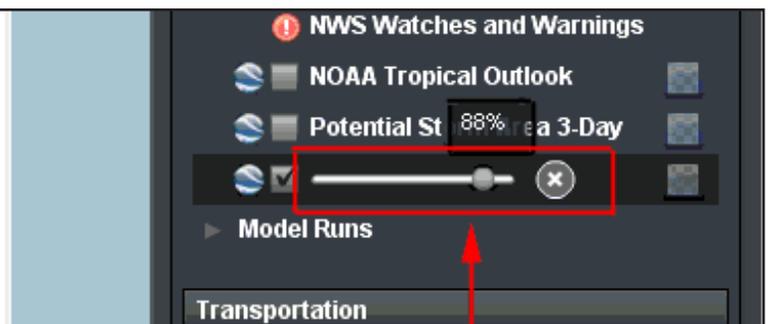
Select the Layers icon from the right side of the screen. Select the Government bar, then click the triangle beside the Military label. This will open all the military installation choices that are available as layers.

Please remember that some layers, like most of the options for military installations, for example, will not show up if you are zoomed very far out, for instance if you are looking at a map of the entire United States. There are simply too many results that would return. To see these layers after you have turned them on, zoom in to an area until the desired icons appear. If the icons still don't appear when you are zoomed in to an area, it could be because that service is down, or because there are simply no matching results in that area.

The box to the far right of the layer name controls the layer transparency. Click that box if you want to increase or decrease the opacity of that layer. A slide rule will open, and you can move the circle within the rule to your desired layer transparency percentage. Click the x icon to close the layer transparency option and see the layer name again.



Click this box first.



Use the slide rule to set the transparency.

The circle icon to the left of the layer name allows you to export a kmz file of that layer and save it to your machine, or open that layer within Google Earth, if you have that application installed on your machine. Select the icon to export or open the file with Google Earth and follow the window prompts to save or open the file as needed.

