



Consolidated Public Safety Communications Center Case Study

Record it... Find it... Play it... It's that simple!

Client

Environment: Covering more than 3,000 square miles of rolling hills and wheat fields, what the Whitcom region lacks in constituents – 83,000 at last count – is more than made up for in extreme logistical challenges for emergency responders. Much of the acreage can only be traversed by four wheel-drive vehicles, and cellular service can be hit-or-miss. Managing all of this are just 26 employees, who rotate through 10 active, multidiscipline workstations at Whitcom's dispatch center.

Challenge

As with many agencies, Whitcom had received an end-of-life notification about its legacy Motorola Centracom Gold Elite TDM (time-division multiplexing) console system. For Patti Kelly, the communication center's director, it was important that a replacement solution offer technological advances to position Whitcom for the future, both from a console and back-end recording standpoint. "When you go to conferences and see what's on the market, you realize that a product being at the end of its life might be a blessing in disguise."

Whitcom was already beginning to experience weekly system failures, with no resources available for parts or repairs, so time was of the essence. To further complicate the issue, funding earmarked for the upgrade had an expiration date – allowing just a few months for the selection and installation of a new system.

Solution

After extensive research, Whitcom found the ideal solutions in Avtec's Scout™ Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) dispatch console system and the Next Generation Capture911 recording system offered by HigherGround, Inc. Furthermore, the integration with Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) software from Spillman Technologies provided increased efficiency, allowing Whitcom to search recorded interactions easily and save valuable time. All solutions integrate seamlessly to provide an easy-to-use call taking, logging and event reconstruction experience.



Prior to selecting the HigherGround recording solution, Whitcom tried an alternative product which did not meet their expectations. At this point, it became even more critical that the HigherGround solution not only meet all their needs, but that integration was seamless, to meet the now condensed deadline.

HigherGround's Capture911 system provides Whitcom a complete interaction recording, incident reconstruction, and dispatcher evaluation suite that exceeds current NENA and APCO standards for Next Generation 911 (NG9-1-1) compliance. Whitcom captures 100% of their interactions, including telephone, radio, TTY/TTD and CAD, and has a system that can expand to meet their future requirements.

The HigherGround system was seamlessly deployed, and – more importantly – went unnoticed by the dispatchers and did not interrupt 911 operations. There have been no system outages or downtime. Patti Kelly is pleased to tell us, "The product just works as promised, without any drama. And customer service from HigherGround on the backend has been outstanding."

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Consolidated Public Safety Communications Center Case Study (Continued)

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"The Real-Time Monitoring feature was a major priority for us. It allows our supervisors to listen in on active calls and easily switch between active calls with one click," Kelly remarked. Additional features of the Capture911 system include:

- Capture of all audio regardless of source (traditional or trunked radio, as well as circuit-switched or VoIP telephone systems).
- Record interactions and associated metadata, available for immediate playback and incident reconstruction.
- Easy-to-use and easy-to-learn customizable user interface saves valuable time.
- Create dynamic reports with real-time monitoring for dispatcher assessment and training.

Avtec's Scout radio dispatch console system offered Whitcom a level of flexibility and compatibility that few other vendors could match. This gave Ms. Kelly the peace of mind that all radios currently in use – an amalgamation including Motorola, Harris and others – would be compatible with the new dispatching system. With the portable Scout console Whitcom purchased, Kelly's Emergency Operations Center can offer remote dispatching and troubleshooting during crises. "They were really understanding of our needs, and amazingly flexible," Kelly said of the Avtec and HigherGround deployment teams.

The Scout console system's interface was configurable to provide a continuous user experience, even running both the Scout system and the legacy Motorola Gold Elite console side by side, so dispatchers could make the conversion at their own speed. Kelly notes, "We were able to adapt our dispatcher's console screens so the transition was much simpler. If we didn't like a color, or font, or where the button was, we could make the change easily."

Migrating to a communications system based on Internet Protocol (IP) technology yielded additional benefits. Whitcom was able to remove legacy TDM leased lines that resulted in cost savings. They also placed Avtec Outpost™ devices — which perform analog-to-digital conversion of audio as well as remote monitoring and control devices — at radio locations on their IP network, which was not possible with a TDM-based dispatch system.

The Avtec Scout solution also provides features that Whitcom relied on from their legacy Motorola Centracom Gold Elite radio dispatch console. These include NENA headset sharing for all dispatcher voice systems, and merging different ambulance and fire paging tone formats for all 72 agencies supported by Whitcom into a single console.

Other features of the Scout system include:

- Pure IP voice recording (radio and telephony)
- Portable dispatch solution for disaster mitigation and recovery
- Ability to monitor and control links and diagnose remote connectivity issues
- Easily expandable to meet current and future needs
- Direct IP interface to all major digital radio and telephony platforms to future-proof their communications investment