

Northwest Central Dispatch System

Case Study

NWCDS Chooses HigherGround's Next Generation of Public Safety Recording and Dispatcher Evaluation Solutions

Northwest Central Dispatch System (NWCDS) is one of the largest consolidated emergency dispatch systems in Illinois, serving many communities in the Chicago area including Arlington Heights, Buffalo Grove, Elk Grove Village, Hoffman Estates, Inverness, Mount Prospect, Palatine, Prospect Heights, Rolling Meadows, Schaumburg, and Streamwood. The combined population for their service area is more than 500,000 people.

Since its inception in 1972, the center continued to grow and expand operations at a rapid pace. The trend of pooling resources and consolidating operations has proven to be efficient and cost-effective for the 11 communities and 22 departments NWCDS presently serves. The state-of-the-art communications center is now housed in a stand-alone 20,000 square foot building in Arlington Heights, in addition to a back-up center located in Schaumburg.

"In the current economic environment, communities are looking at every possible way to save costs and consolidating services makes sense. There is a huge fiscal savings in a cooperative venture that shares capital equipment such as computer aided dispatch (CAD), logging recorder, 9-1-1 hardware and software, mobile data, and radio systems," said Cindy Barbera-Brelle, NWCDS Executive Director. The agency also achieved operational benefits and personnel cost savings with a total staff of 90 which includes 73 full-time dispatchers. At any given time, a minimum of 12 dispatchers are on duty to service the entire area. It would require more than triple the amount of personnel to staff 11 individual PSAPs.

Preparing for the Next Generation

In June 2009, NWCDS embarked on a dual project. The center was looking to replace its 9-1-1 telephone system with a next generation IP-based system. At the same time, NWCDS decided to replace its recording system with one that would support its current needs yet be capable of evolving with future NG9-1-1 requirements.

Of the half-dozen vendors that were sent a Request for Proposal, HigherGround's authorized reseller, Commercial Electronics Corp., was selected as the recording and dispatcher evaluation resource because "Capture911 is a more intuitive product. The ability for us to do configurations and run several reports on our own without having to involve our Tech Department is important to us. We liked the screen capture module as well, but could not fit it into our current budget so we plan to add the feature in the next fiscal year."

All HigherGround Capture911 systems are designed using a modular approach and as a result are fully upgradeable systems. Organizations can simply select from the modules and features they desire to develop a tailored system that is easy to use, satisfies the strictest regulatory standards, and provides the best value for their immediate needs. HigherGround's scalable and flexible architecture allows PSAPs to upgrade basic systems as new mission critical technologies are mandated or budgets become available. "We are done with fork lift upgrades," says Barbera-Brelle.

Favorite Features

NWCDS has dedicated staff with the sole responsibility of responding to an average of 200 subpoena requests per month. The requested calls can be located quickly using over a dozen search options for instant retrieval of archived data such as customized filters, annotations, flagging, and time-indexed information. Call recordings have a "digital signature" that validates the authenticity of voice recordings, ensuring the data has not been tampered with or altered. Once the specific calls are found, they can be directly emailed or saved to a stand-alone CD.

"I have access to the software from my desktop, as do most people in our agency," says Barbera-Brelle. HigherGround offers an unlimited user access license so there are no hidden additional per-seat charges. "What I really appreciate about Capture911, having used it for about eight months, is that it can support multiple modes. We have a Genesis box so we can capture the radio IDs. I also like the fact that it can support analog and digital or analog and IP at the same time. We have a unique mix of needs at NWCDS and the HigherGround system supports them all."