

Rowlett Police Department

Case Study

The City of Rowlett is home to approximately 55,000 residents and is nestled on the shores of Lake Ray Hubbard in far eastern Dallas County and a portion of western Rockwall County. Rowlett has more than 30 miles of shoreline on the lake, making it one of the most beautiful areas to live in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. The city is undergoing major change with the completion of the President George Bush Turnpike (PGBT) eastern extension and the DART Blue Line light rail extension from Garland.

The City of Rowlett is served by a combined 911 communications center which processes calls for police, fire and EMS. Beth English is Communications Director of the center and oversees 14 dispatchers, 2 of which are supervisors, with a minimum of two dispatchers on duty at all times. The center processed over 21 thousand 911 calls in 2011. All dispatch communications are recorded using the HigherGround's NextGen Capture911 Incident Reconstruction recording system.

The HigherGround recording system is used as part of the Quality Assurance program. Calls are replayed through the HigherGround system and scored in the EMD QA software. HigherGround's screen capture component is also utilized to assist in quality assurance, training, employee evaluations and investigating citizen complaints. Ms. English states, "Because both of my supervisors and I listen to calls, it helps us determine when we have a customer service issue that needs to be addressed. "

"In one incident, I had an officer complain about the lack of customer service with one dispatcher who had sent the officer to a structure fire. The officer complained that when she asked about the fire, she was told the structure was 'up in fire'. The recording sounded like that's exactly what the dispatcher said, but with the screen capture, we were able to see that she was actually reading the call sheet which said ... 'oven fire.' Without the screen capture, I would never have figured that out!" states Ms. English.

She goes on to say, "It also provides excellent documentation for employee evaluations." In another instance, a trainee was not catching on as quickly as he should have been. Around the same time, two high priority calls were entered with the wrong addresses, causing a response delay. For both of these issues, screen capture was accessed for those time periods and a determination was made that the trainer was not effectively working with the trainee, so a plan of what to do next with the trainee was formulated.

"The HigherGround system is easy to use and is used several times a day," Ms English explains. "At my previous agency we had the HigherGround system installed; before we could get everyone trained on it, we needed a recording on a high priority call. I was able to walk the supervisor through displaying the call, saving it, and emailing it to the detective from over the phone. Because we use it for the same thing most of the time, there are very few times I have to go to the 'books', but the help file is very easy to navigate, so I'm usually able to find something myself without having to call support. I also trained all the detectives how to use the new system since it had so many more features than the previous version, and they are now pulling their own recordings so Communications doesn't have to do it. And you know how hard it is to teach a man with a gun anything!" chuckles Ms. English.

"I'm very pleased with HigherGround as were all others at our agency. Although I had worked with the updated version, the others had not, and they were very pleased at how easy it was to use and all the different search capabilities that were available" shares Ms. English. "I'm most impressed with the screen capture component...it has proven to be worth every penny! We would make the same purchasing decision today!"

Ms. English further states, "I have worked with Commercial Electronics several times over the years and have received excellent service. We have had no problems reaching our service level objectives as far as being able to provide what is needed for court cases. We would also be willing to recommend Commercial Electronics to others in the industry."