NICE®

Improving 9-1-1 Investigations with Faster and More Credible Incident Reconstruction

Customer Profile
Public Safety

Website
www.buckscounty.org

Location
Ivyland, Pennsylvania, USA

Needs
Replace outdated call and radio recording system and its inefficient, hard to use interfaces with a modern solution. Introduce formalized quality assurance and training. Improve investigations of complaints and expedite remedial action.

NICE Solutions
- NICE Recording of Motorola Astro 25 IP Radio communications and VESTA M1 system with a Nortel CS1000 opt61 switch, with Redundancy across 2 sites
- 911 Operator Screen Recording
- NICE Inform Verify Instant Replay
- Quality Assurance Evaluation

The Impact
- Improved efficiency of internal investigations
- Improved quality assurance processes and employee accountability

"NICE's screen capture is fantastic for investigations of complaints. Instead of tedious mining through hundreds of pages of data logs, we just play a 5-minute screen video clip to find out what caused a delay in call answer or dispatch."

Todd Neumann
Deputy Director of 911 Technology
Bucks County Emergency Communications

About Bucks County Emergency Communications

Bucks County Department of Emergency Communications serves over 600,000 residents and over 130 emergency services agencies, including Police, Fire and EMS. From its inception, the center has continually met the needs of the quickly growing constituency, serving as a fully consolidated Enhanced 9-1-1 emergency communications system. With a trained dispatch staff of 125, the center responds to about a million calls annually.

The Challenge

The mission of the Bucks County 9-1-1 Communications Center is to provide all callers with accurate, timely, and professional emergency communications services and to maintain a quality of service that meets or exceeds the local, state, and national standards of care.

To support this mission in its high call volume environment, the County needed a reliable and easy-to-use recording and incident reconstruction solution. Centralized data storage and fast, simple retrieval and export of call, radio, and screen recordings were major considerations, especially for investigations of incidents, complaints, or internal misconduct.

The County wanted a vendor with thorough understanding of the demands of mission-critical 9-1-1 recording. The vendor's responsiveness and service quality standards had to be in sync with the County's standards.

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The Solution

The County selected NICE's award-winning communications recording solution, along with the tightly integrated Quality Assurance (QA) module for the objective, software based evaluation of employee performance. In fact, the County's Emergency Communications Center pulls out all the stops in its pursuit of best possible service quality. It not only regularly conducts internal call quality evaluations, but it also surveys citizen satisfaction after 9-1-1 calls for emergency response. Apart from soliciting free-form comments and suggestions, the County's Quality Assurance Surveys contain some of the same questions as their internal QA audit forms. Citizen perspectives add a valuable dimension to the objectivity and thoroughness of the County's quality assurance program.

"Our shift supervisors also use NICE recordings for investigating complaints, for listening to and monitoring new hires who are still in training, as well as any dispatchers who show signs of struggles. They must be consistently monitored and coached by our trainers," explained Todd Neumann, Buck County's Deputy Director of 911 Technology.

All calls taken by trainees and probationary employees are reviewed for 6 months. Those who pass this period of close monitoring are then randomly spot-checked, according to the percentage of calls mandated by legislation for monthly review. This helped the quality assurance team identify and resolve undesirable patterns, habits, or knowledge gaps. Telecommunicators have access to their completed evaluations and associated call recordings - they must sign off on each evaluation and may enter comments. "Our next step will be automated, random selection of calls for evaluation, based on rules we can set up in NICE Inform," added Neumann. This will further improve the objectivity and efficiency of the quality evaluation process.

The County also implemented NICE Inform Verify for instant replay of recent recordings. It is used predominantly by dispatchers when they deal with difficult or hard to understand communications, or when they need to communicate via multiple radio channels. "With NICE Inform Verify, dispatchers are also able to get to data like aliases or emergency ID activations, which they cannot see on the mobile radio on their command post," said Neumann. Each dispatcher logs in with their User ID, which then determines the scope of their access. They may only replay their own communications. Their access is also limited by what they dispatch for – Police, Fire, or EMS.

Supervisors, QA staff, trainers, and employees in charge of records management have access to full call search interface. "NICE software is very intuitive and easy to use. Our previous system's search and playback interfaces were more complicated. And we were not able to search by phone number," said Neumann.

"NICE customer support is a great group. They understand the issue at hand right away. We get immediate responses. I never had to ask twice."

Todd Neumann, Deputy Director of 911 Technology, Bucks County Emergency Communications.

"I really like where the NICE platform is going with all the data being collected with calls. Now we have a lot more filtering options than what our previous logger provided," said Neumann. This is very helpful when a prosecutor requests all recordings associated to an incident, or when the center has to respond to a complaint. "But even better," added Neumann, "NICE's screen recording is fantastic for investigations of complaints. Instead of tedious mining through hundreds of pages of CAD data logs, we just play a 5-minute screen video clip to find out what caused a delay in call answer or dispatch," added Neumann. "When nothing glaring stands out that would prevent the dispatcher from timely action, investigation can become elusive. For example, why was a radio transmission missed even though the radio channel was clear? Or, when a call was taken and perfectly handled, why is there no CAD entry for it? Traditionally, you would playback a phone call and possibly hear a lost connection in the middle of it. You couldn't necessarily tell what happened from the CAD records. But when we review screen recordings, we can see that the dispatcher received several messages from other parties requesting urgent assistance during the call, or something happened in another application. Or you may find out that he was just shopping on-line."

NICE's full time screen capture solution saves recordings in 5 to 15 minute increments. They can be synchronized with call and radio recordings for playback, allowing a better insight into operator attitudes and challenges. Screen recordings are also used for CAD system diagnostics.

"NICE customer support is a great group," said Neumann in conclusion. "We get immediate responses, I never had to escalate anything. Service techs understand the issue at hand right away and promptly get the right team involved. They send constant updates to inform us about what's happening until the ticket is closed. I never had to ask twice."

About NICE Public Safety

NICE public safety solutions integrate and put into context information from many sources to help emergency communications centers and investigation departments reconstruct and understand the who, what, when, where and why of an incident. NICE Inform, the industry-leading digital evidence management (DEM) solution, gives emergency communications centers better insight into how to continuously improve their operations. Over 3,000 organizations rely on NICE public safety solutions daily.