

## Emergency Dispatch

# Tennessee PSAP Prepares for Next-Generation Communications

## Zetron and Cartwright Communication Put McMinn County on Path to the Future

Those in the field of public safety know that changes in radio requirements and E9-1-1 standards are on the horizon.

But because the technology and standards are still evolving, no one knows exactly what they will require. What most do know is that radio-dispatch equipment will have to conform to FCC-mandated 12.5 MHz narrow-banding by January 1, 2013. Agencies may eventually be required to conform to 6.25 MHz narrow banding, however, which could follow closely on the heels of the previous requirements.

In addition, E9-1-1 call-taking equipment will have to support an explosion of new technologies.

So what can public-safety agencies do to prepare for these inevitable but as yet undefined changes? How can they be sure the equipment they invest in now will still meet their needs in five years?

These are the questions that the McMinn County, Tennessee, 9-1-1 Center was facing recently.

Their solution was to update their existing Zetron dispatch and call-talking systems with the Integrator Suite of workstations and common-control electronics. Cartwright Communication Technology, of Knoxville,



Tennessee, completed the installation for McMinn County in October of 2008.

The radio dispatch equipment supports both 12.5 MHz and 6.25 MHz narrow banding, solving in one fell swoop the problem of how to meet both sets of requirements. And the updated 9-1-1 call-taking equipment positions McMinn County to respond effectively to new telecommunications standards as they emerge.

### McMinn County E9-1-1

The McMinn County E9-1-1 Communications Center, in Athens, Tennessee, is the county's primary public safety answering point (PSAP).

"We answer all 9-1-1 calls for the county, and provide dispatching for the McMinn County Sheriff, county emergency medical services, and the county's rural fire and rescue departments," says McMinn County Emergency Communications District director, Marvin Kelley. "We also dispatch for the police departments of the towns of Inglewood, Niota, and Calhoun; and we transfer calls to Athens and Etowah. We answer approximately 40,000 emergency calls and 100,000 non-emergency calls per year."

## Why upgrade?

Although McMinn County was happy with the equipment they already had in place—Zetron's Series 4000 Communication Control System and Series 3200 E9-1-1 Telephone System—they knew they needed to prepare for the their industry's impending changes.

"We're positioning ourselves to get ready for next-generation technology," adds Kelley. "To do that, we had to leave analog and go digital."

## Cartwright Communication Technology

McMinn County picked Zetron reseller Cartwright Communication Technology to obtain and implement the new equipment. Cartwright Communication sells and services wireless communication systems for business, industry and government agencies throughout their region. Over the years, they have been a consistent top-ten Zetron reseller.

Kelley says that they chose Cartwright Communication because they had worked with the vendor for years: "Their technicians really know what they're doing," he says. "I have a lot of confidence in them."

## The Zetron solution

The process of choosing the new equipment for the center involved everyone from its administrators to its operators.

"I talked to the operators before we purchased the equipment," says Kelley. "We all read about it and looked at it, and I got their feeling about it and their buy-in before making the decision."

"As it turns out, selecting the Zetron equipment was a no brainer," Kelley continues. "Everyone liked it, and it had worked well for us in the past. Plus, the price was right."

The upgrade for McMinn County would include:

- Four positions of Zetron's Integrator RD Workstation
- Zetron's Model 4048 Common Control Unit (CCU)
- Zetron Integrator Suite software, including Integrator Instant Recall Recorder (IRR) and Integrator MIS
- Four positions of Zetron's 9-1-1 Computer Telephony Integration (CTI) Workstation

Each position would handle both dispatching and call-taking.

Cartwright explains how the new equipment was implemented: "We took one position down, built the new position, then took another position down and built the

second position. Two of the existing positions remained along with the four additional new positions, for a total of six at the main center," he says.

## Legacy consoles become backup

In addition to updating the equipment, the project achieved another important objective for McMinn County: it gave them a backup center.

Once Cartwright Communication had removed two of the four existing button-based consoles, they were installed at a site several miles from the main center.

"This adds to our redundancy," says McMinn County 9-1-1 supervisor, Susan Jackson. "If our main location goes out due to a disaster like a fire or tornado, we have the other one to use as backup."

"We've used legacy Zetron consoles to create backup sites for a number of customers," adds Cartwright. "Often, if a PSAP is moving to a new 9-1-1 center, we leave their existing Zetron consoles in place for backup. Forever is long time, but those legacy Zetron consoles do seem to last that long."

## Using buttons for simple operations

According to both Kelley and Cartwright, operators at McMinn County have taken to PC-based consoles very well. They like the equipment's ease of use and consolidation of resources.

"Another thing they like about the Integrator RD," says Cartwright, "is the choice to use buttons for simple operations like paging and door controls. Operators don't have to get out of their normal screens and go somewhere else to find the icon to press to make it work. They can just go over and press the button on the button panel. Integrator RD allows this; no other console does."

## A happy customer

There's no question that Marvin Kelley is a loyal customer who is happy with his new equipment and the process that went into installing it.

"Cartwright Communication made it a real smooth transition and a wonderful experience," he says. "And everybody is real pleased with the new equipment. It's more streamlined and easier to use, and it definitely prepares us for the next-generation of communications equipment standards and changes. When the new standards get written, we'll be half-way home." ■

### ZETRON USA

PO Box 97004  
Redmond, WA  
98073-9704  
USA

TEL 425 820 6363

FAX 425 820 7031

zetron@zetron.com

WWW.ZETRON.COM

### ZETRON UK

27-29 Campbell Court  
Bramley TADLEY  
Basingstoke RG26 5EG  
UK

TEL +44 (0)1256 880663

FAX +44 (0)1256 880491

uk@zetron.com

### ZETRON AUSTRALASIA

PO Box 3045  
Stafford Mail Centre  
Stafford QLD 4053  
Australia

TEL +61 7 3856 4888

FAX +61 7 3356 6877

ausales@zetron.com



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Advantage Newsletter  
April 2009.

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005-7577A April 2009