

Iowa PSAP Gets i3-Ready with MAX Call-Taking

Benton County, Iowa, recently replaced their flood-damaged 9-1-1 system with Zetron's IP-based, i3-ready 9-1-1 MAX Call-Taking system. The new system integrates 9-1-1 and administrative call taking and will also be able to connect the PSAP to Iowa's upcoming statewide IP network.

In June of 2008, Benton County Iowa's Law Enforcement Center fell victim to the worst flooding the area had ever seen. The center's first floor was flooded and its radio dispatch consoles were ruined.

Zetron was called in to help replace the damaged dispatch equipment. (See the September 2008 *Advantage*.) Equipment that usually takes several weeks to ship was shipped and installed in under a week, and the center was able to resume full dispatching operations much sooner than anyone had thought was possible.

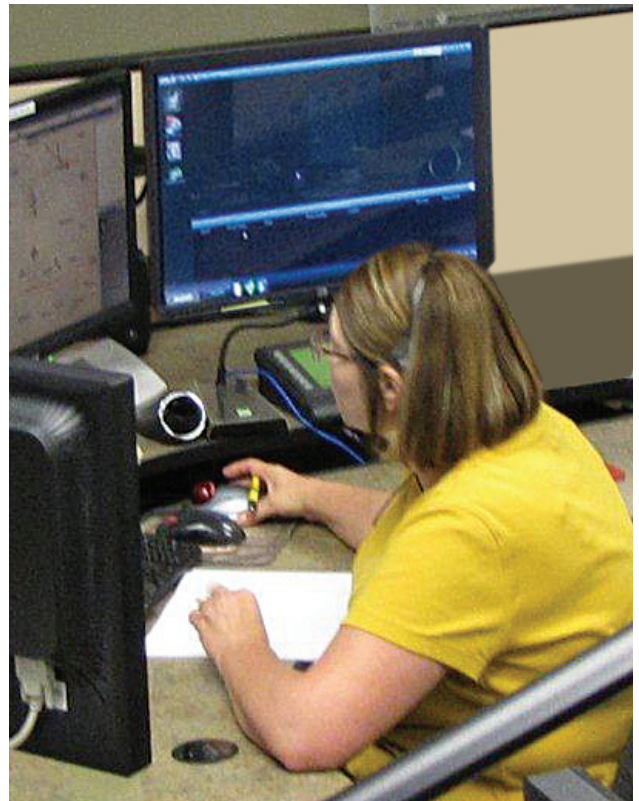
All seemed well with their equipment. But over time, their non-Zetron 9-1-1 call-taking system, which had initially appeared to be unaffected by the flooding, began to fail. Zetron was again called in to help. This time they chose to replace the center's flood-damaged 9-1-1 system with Zetron's groundbreaking, IP-based MAX Call-Taking system. Installed in April of 2012 by Zetron and RACOM—one of Zetron's top resellers—the new system is providing the center with a fully integrated, Next-Generation i3-ready 9-1-1 and administrative phone system. The system will also be able to connect to Iowa's IP-based network when it becomes available.

In the heart of the heartland

Situated firmly in the heartland of the American Midwest, Benton County, Iowa, covers roughly 718 square miles and has a population of about 26,000. Although much of Iowa's population has shifted from rural to urban localities in recent decades, most of Benton County's population still lives in rural areas, and agriculture remains its primary industry.

The Benton County Law Enforcement Center

The Benton County Law Enforcement Center houses the sheriff's department and county jail and serves as Benton County's public-safety communications hub. As such, it is responsible for answering the county's 9-1-1 and administrative calls. The center also provides dispatching for the county's fire, ambulance and police, and for 14 cities within the county.



'The humidity got to it'

Benton County Sheriff, Randy Forsyth, says that it was the long-term effects of high humidity that damaged their 9-1-1 equipment. "The 'brains' of the 9-1-1 equipment was upstairs in an area that wasn't flooded," he says. "So we thought it would be OK. But the humidity eventually got to it, and it started having problems."

At about the same time, the 9-1-1 system's manufacturer was bought out by another company, and it became increasingly difficult to get support when issues with the system arose. "When we had a problem, we'd call for help on a Monday morning, and they wouldn't call back until Friday," says Forsyth. "Repairs were also getting very expensive because they weren't being covered by warranty."

The situation with Benton County's 9-1-1 system had become untenable, and the center's board of directors could see this. "They finally bit the bullet and decided to get a new system," says Forsyth.

Going with IP

Benton County administrators thoroughly researched 9-1-1 systems. They then issued a request for proposals (RFP) for a two-position, IP-based system that would be able to serve as both a 9-1-1 call-taking and administrative phone system.

Forsyth says they decided on an IP-based system because "It's the latest-and-greatest technology. We wanted to get the most current equipment out there and also prepare for Next-Generation 9-1-1. An IP-based system would also connect us to the statewide network that's in the process of moving from analog to IP technology."

RACOM responded to the RFP and won the bid for the project quite handily with a proposal based on Zetron's IP-based MAX Call-Taking system.

RACOM

Headquartered in Marshalltown, Iowa, RACOM sells, installs and services wireless voice, data and video solutions for public-safety agencies throughout the upper Midwest. "With 13 service centers throughout the region, service is only a two-hour drive away from any of our customers," says RACOM sales associate, Diana Richardson. "We also provide 24/7 live support, so when a customer calls, they don't get an answering service; they get a real person who can start helping them right away."

Positive experiences, good reviews

Forsyth explains the main reasons why Zetron and RACOM were chosen for the project. "The MAX system was the only one that would give us the critical 9-1-1 call-taking and admin phone integration we need," he says. "Plus, we've had very positive experiences with Zetron over the years, including after the 2008 floods. Zetron 9-1-1 equipment also got great reviews from people who are already using it. In addition to that, Zetron was the most responsive to our questions. Some vendors gave us answers they later had to retract. Zetron was direct and definitive about what the system could and couldn't do. RACOM's responsiveness, reputation and close proximity to us also affected our decision."

'Above and beyond'

A new, two-position MAX Call-Taking system was delivered to the customer's site and set up in a conference room. It was run in parallel with the old system until testing was completed.

Forsyth says RACOM and Zetron were both very involved and helpful throughout the entire installation process and its immediate aftermath. "Zetron and RACOM were not only here for the installation," he says. "They stayed on after the operators were trained and the new system went live to make sure it was operating smoothly and our operators were comfortable using it. They went above and beyond."

'A very nice system'

The system has been running for several months, and Forsyth reports that he's happy with the system and RACOM and Zetron's support. "It's a very nice system," he says. "It's Next-Gen ready and supports 72 admin phones that include an auto attendant, which is important when we get busy and have only one position staffed. The system is also very easy to use. I go in and use it once in a while just to keep familiar with it, and within minutes of sitting down in front of it, I'm good to go. I also continue to get great service from both Zetron and RACOM. Anytime I have a question, I can call them and get a call back in about 15 minutes. We couldn't have asked for a better installation or higher levels of responsiveness." ■



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