MAX Call-Taking Passes the Ultimate PSAP Test

The MAX Call-Taking system installed at Jersey County, Illinois, is receiving kudos for its redundancy, sophisticated reporting features, and the many ways it simplifies dispatchers' jobs.

William "Rob" Hedger, executive director of the Emergency Telephone Safety Board (ETSB)/E9-1-1 center in Jersey County, Illinois, makes no bones about his enthusiasm for Zetron's MAX Call-Taking system.

In a recent letter to the director of another public-safety answering point (PSAP) that was considering MAX Call-Taking, Hedger was very willing to vouch for it: "We installed MAX Call-Taking about eight months ago, and are very happy with it," he wrote. "We looked at a number of other systems, but we chose MAX Call-Taking, and we're glad we did."

Not only has MAX Call-Taking proved to be a perfect fit for Jersey County's current operations; it has also prepared them to meet Next-Generation i3 standards and has put them in a position to share mutual support with other nearby agencies that are also

using MAX Call-Taking. This adds considerable redundancy and reliability to the services that 9-1-1 centers throughout the region are able to provide to their immediate and extended communities.

Why a new system?

The Jersey County 9-1-1 center answers all 9-1-1 calls originating within the county and provides dispatching for all law-enforcement, fire, and emergency services, except for Jerseyville City, which handles its own dispatching.

In 2014, Jersey County was notified that their aging 9-1-1 system would no longer be supported. This is not good news for a PSAP. "We had to start looking at what we'd need, both for the immediate future and beyond," says Hedger.

They defined their requirements for a new system and began a process of reviewing products that might meet them. This included interviewing multiple vendors, inviting some to give onsite demonstrations, and visiting sites where systems they were considering were already installed.

Case Study | Jersey County, IL

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MAX Call-Taking is a strong contender

Although they were looking at a number of solutions, the Zetron MAX Call-Taking system proposed by Zetron reseller Global Technical Systems, Inc. (GTSi) was a standout from the start.

"We went and saw MAX Call-Taking systems that were installed at several counties nearby," says Hedger. "We really liked the system's small footprint in the backroom, which was top concern for us because our space is so limited. We also liked its robustness, its ability to provide the backbone for both our 9-1-1 and administrative system, and the fact that it would facilitate backup with other agencies using the same system. And GTSi would be servicing the system. They are our service provider for our Zetron dispatch system. They're close by and very responsive; we have a great working relationship with them."

"The network can be a single pinch point for a lot of systems," adds GTSi V.P., Chris Ginder. "The level of redundancy Zetron has built into MAX Call-Taking addresses this issue better than any other system on the market. Jersey County was very impressed with this."

One good system leads to another

Another factor was that MAX Call-Taking would not be Jersey County 9-1-1's first Zetron system. They'd been using a Zetron Series 4000 radio dispatch system since the early 2000s. And they were very satisfied with its performance and their experiences with Zetron.

"Their Zetron dispatch system was super reliable, and so was Zetron" says Ginder. "When a fire broke out in their equipment room and destroyed the system's card cage (through no fault of the Zetron system), Zetron jumped into high gear to replace it. They immediately mailed out new equipment, we picked it up at the airport, and we had the PSAP back on the air within 24 hours. They were very impressed by the speed and quality of the service, all around."

For all of these reasons, Jersey County chose MAX Call-Taking as their new system. Not only would it do the best job of meeting their criteria, but it would also update the agency to an IP-based, i3-Next Generation 9-1-1 system designed to support the expanded call formats—such as text to 9-1-1 messages—PSAPs will eventually be required to handle.

A live cutover, no missed calls

Ginder says that to install the new system for Jersey County 9-1-1, GTSi used the same successful approach that has worked very well for many of their projects.

"We have a technique where we pull one of the 9-1-1 trunks off of the existing system and get the new system up, running, and tested," says Ginder. "Then we install one position and slowly transfer trunk by trunk from the old system to the new one. This gradual approach gives us a nice reverse path that allows us to go backwards quickly if something should go awry. But—knock on wood—nothing ever has! And that was the case this time as well. We were able to cut the system live and never miss a call."

Training on an intuitive system

Global Technology Systems trained the agency's telecommunicators on the new MAX Call-Taking system. "The training went relatively fast," says Hedger. "It's an easy system to operate."

"The telecommunicators had many of the general concepts down before training even started," Ginder adds. "But the training was useful because it helped them make the most of enhancements and supporting functions and features that are new to them."

No cookie-cutter deployment

When asked whether GTSi made adaptations to the MAX Call-Taking system for Jersey County's purposes, Ginder says: "There's is no cookie cutter deployment for call-taking. There are always adaptations—for CAD [computer-aided dispatch], records, mapping, existing networks, and existing telephony equipment. So yes, there were modifications. But MAX Call-Taking has the latitude to accommodate them."

A successful year

A year into its operation, MAX Call-Taking continues to garner praise for its small footprint, ability to integrate with administrative phone lines, and its flexibility to support any expansion the center might want to undertake. These are the very qualities that prompted Hedger to write his letter endorsing the system. He has praise for additional features as well.

"It's a very easy system to use," he says. "Everything our dispatchers need is at their fingertips. Plus, with our old system, I wasn't able to pull call reports and had no idea how many calls we were taking per month. Now, I can easily go in and pull the call data I need in order to report back to the ETSB on how many calls we're taking. This is great because it allows us to give a complete and accurate accounting of what we're actually doing. But MAX Call-Taking also passes the most important test of all," Hedger adds. "It makes our dispatchers' jobs much easier."∎