

CASE STUDY



THE CHALLENGE

As many emergency contact centers began considering Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) capable upgrades, the Whitcom consolidated regional communications center also faced two separate and imminent equipment challenges. For one, Whitcom began to experience weekly system failures on its aging call recording system. For another, its legacy dispatch console received an end-of-life notification, and there would be no resources available for parts or repairs. They needed to implement new solutions — and fast. To further complicate the issue, funding earmarked for portions of the upgrade had an approaching expiration date — expediting the selection and installation of the new systems.

For Patti Kelly, Whitcom's director, the recorder and console she would select needed to do more than replace the old systems. Kelly also needed to find forward-thinking and NG9-1-1 ready solutions, capable of positioning Whitcom for the future of emergency communications.

THE SOLUTION

With a great deal of research, Kelly discovered the ideal solutions to meet Whitcom's needs — the HigherGround® Capture911™ recording system and the Avtec® Scout™ Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) dispatch console. The integration of Capture911 and Scout with Whitcom's existing Spillman CAD system created an efficient and easy-to-use call taking, logging and incident reconstruction experience, allowing dispatchers to easily search recorded interactions and save valuable time.



consoles you can count on

WHITCOM REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

Consolidated **1996**
Regionalized **2004**

26 employees rotate through
10 multi-discipline work stations

Serving up to **70** agencies, including:

35 fire
18 police
15 EMS
2 universities
3 cities
3 counties
2 states



Migrating to a communications system based on Internet Protocol (IP) technology yields additional benefits. Whitcom removed legacy TDM leased lines, resulting in cost savings. They also placed Avtec Outpost™ devices — which perform analog-to-digital conversion of audio as well as remote monitoring and control — at radio locations on their IP network, which was not possible with a TDM-based dispatch system.

The Avtec Scout solution also provides features that Whitcom relied on from their legacy dispatch console, such as NENA headset sharing for all dispatcher voice systems and merged ambulance and fire paging tone formats for the 70 agencies supported by Whitcom, all within a single console.

PROJECT OUTCOME

Both Capture911 and Scout offer additional benefits over the legacy products. One unexpected benefit of the combined solutions is the ability to capture and make use of metadata. Due to challenges of the terrain and mountain-top radio systems, knowing geography and correct radio repeater selections is vital. Now, with metadata provided by Avtec, the HigherGround system can capture the actual repeater selections chosen by the dispatchers, when broadcasting and troubleshooting repeaters in need of maintenance.

For Kelly, seamless integrations and zero downtime cemented her confidence that she had chosen the right solution and vendor partners. “The collaboration and partnership between Avtec and HigherGround was impressive, and ultimately beneficial to the development and deployment of the new Whitcom solution.”



Kelly reports that the level of service and support Whitcom received was second-to-none. “Both Avtec and HigherGround returned calls and emails quickly, and have really been a joy to work with. And both products are very intuitive — once you log on, it is instantly set up and ready to go.”

Kelly discovered the importance of investing in technology that can support the needs of today — as well as the future. Converting to NG9-1-1 requires finding forward-thinking partners that offer the perfect combination of features, benefits and price. With solutions from HigherGround and Avtec, Whitcom was able to transform into a modern, innovative and NG9-1-1 ready emergency communications center.



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Whitcom's territory includes the Cities of Pullman, Clarkston and Moscow, and the Counties of Whitman, Asotin and Latah. Whitcom crosses the Washington/Idaho state borders, and also includes the campuses at Washington State University and the University of Idaho.

83,000 Constituents
3,000 Square Miles

What the Whitcom region lacks in constituents is more than made up for in extreme logistical challenges for emergency responders. Much of the acreage can only be traversed by four-wheel-drive vehicles, and cellular service can be hit-or-miss.



capture911™

Call Recording Features:

- Capture 100% of all audio regardless of source (traditional or trunked radio, as well as circuit-switched or VoIP telephone systems)
- Record interactions and associated metadata, available for immediate playback and incident reconstruction
- Easy-to-use and easy-to-learn customizable user interface saves valuable time
- Create dynamic reports with real-time monitoring for dispatcher assessment and training

Scout™

Scout Console Features:

- Pure IP voice recording (radio and telephony with metadata)
- Portable dispatch solution for disaster mitigation and recovery
- Ability to monitor and control links and diagnose remote connectivity issues
- Easily expandable to meet current and future needs
- Direct IP interface to major digital radio and telephony platforms to future-proof communications investment

HIGHERGROUND CAPTURE911

When HigherGround's Capture911 was deployed, the transition went nearly unnoticed by dispatchers, and most importantly, did not interrupt the 9-1-1 operations. "There have been no system outages or downtime," Kelly was pleased to report. "The product just works, as promised, without any drama. And on the backend, customer service from HigherGround and our reseller Commercial Electronics Corporation has been outstanding."

The successful deployment of Capture911 was particularly significant in this case. Previously, Whitcom had installed an alternative call recording system — only to discover it lacked basic requirements, forcing them to search for a replacement solution less than a year after installation.

The HigherGround Capture911 solution provides Whitcom a complete interaction recording, incident reconstruction and dispatcher evaluation suite that exceeds current NENA and APCO standards for NG9-1-1 compliance. Whitcom now captures 100% of interactions (including telephone, radio, TTY/TDD and CAD) and has a system that can easily expand to meet their future requirements.

"The product just works, as promised, without any drama."

"When you go to conferences and see what's on the market, you realize that a product at the end of its life might be a blessing in disguise," remarked Kelly. "The Real-Time Monitoring feature, as an example, is a major priority for us. It allows our supervisors to listen in on active calls and easily switch between calls with one click. And Screen Capture allows us to capture additional critical information for incident reconstruction, and troubleshoot areas of concerns regarding how calls are dispatched."

AVTEC SCOUT

Whitcom selected Avtec's Scout radio dispatch console, a product that offers a level of flexibility and compatibility that few other vendors can match. This provides Kelly with peace of mind that all radios currently in use — an amalgamation including Motorola, Harris and others — are compatible with the new dispatching system. And, with the portable Scout console, Whitcom can now offer remote dispatching and troubleshooting during crises.

Scout's interface was configured to provide a continuous user experience, temporarily running both Scout and the legacy console side-by-side, so dispatchers could make the conversion at their own pace. Kelly notes, "We were able to adapt our dispatcher's console screens so the transition was much simpler. If we didn't like a color, or font, or the location of a button, we could make the change easily."



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