

ZETRON[®] ADVANTAGE

MISSION-CRITICAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS



Alicia Larson manages multiple resources from her dispatch position at the Bella Vista PD.

MAX Dispatch Offers Arkansas PD Updated Functionality, NEXEDGE Integration

The Bella Vista, Arkansas, PD's new IP-based MAX Dispatch system provides updated functionality and a seamless connection to the NEXEDGE™ radio network that will soon be implemented throughout the city.

In the spring of 2012, a big change was in the offing for the Bella Vista, Arkansas, police department's dispatch operations.

Their Zetron dispatch system had worked well for years, but was aging. In addition, the police department needed equipment capable of connecting to the NEXEDGE™ digital radio network that will soon be used by agencies throughout Bella Vista. With these two factors providing the major impetus, Bella Vista decided to invest in a new dispatch system.

Bella Vista, Arkansas

Tucked away in the Ozark Mountains of northwestern Arkansas, Bella Vista began in 1965 as a retirement community. In 2006, residents voted to incorporate, and Bella Vista became a municipality. Although its current population of just over 27,000 still includes a high percentage of retirees, the city has grown to also include younger families and individuals of working age.

Bella Vista PD Communication Center

As a secondary public-safety answering point (PSAP), the Bella Vista PD receives 9-1-1 calls that are transferred to them from the county's primary PSAP. They also dispatch for their own department and for the city's fire and ambulance services.

Time to replace an aging system

Bella Vista police chief Ken Farmer explains that although they'd been using their dispatch system for only about five years, it was actually much older. "The system was donated by the county," he says, "so it's probably about 15 years old—quite old in public-safety years. It's a very good Zetron button-based system that has always very run well for us, but parts for it were becoming difficult to find. If something were to break, we'd have to rely on replacement parts we have on hand."

Another factor driving the purchase of a new system was the Bella Vista fire department's recent installation of a NEXEDGE radio network that would eventually be used by all of Bella Vista's agencies. In order to use the network, the police department needed a dispatch system capable of integrating with it.

The winning proposal

With these concerns in mind, Bella Vista initiated a bidding process for a new dispatch system. The winning proposal featuring Zetron's MAX Dispatch system was submitted by Bella Vista's long-time equipment and service provider, Smith Two-Way Radio.

Smith Two-Way Radio

Based in Fayetteville, Arkansas, Smith Two-Way Radio is a third-generation, family-owned company that has been in business since 1929.

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MAX Dispatch gives you the solid reliability and performance you expect from Zetron in a breakthrough, IP-based dispatch console system.

- **Intelligent UI:** Highlights information pertinent to the task at hand; reduces information overload.
- **Built-in Network Health Monitor:** Provides constant feedback about network status.
- **Advanced tools:** Streamline installation and minimize field time.
- **Dual connections:** Ensure end-to-end network redundancy.



Dispatcher Lonnie Ekstrom answers a call at the University of Oregon campus police department.

MAX Dispatch Goes to College!

The University of Oregon campus police department's new MAX Dispatch system improves their interoperability and also gives them the flexibility to dispatch remotely from campus events that require a police presence.

Crime is not the first thing most of us would typically associate with an institution of higher learning. But Lynn Wilborn says minor crimes such as underage drinking and petty theft are a daily fact of life at the University of Oregon—as they are at most colleges and universities. And she ought to know; she's the law-enforcement communications and records manager at the University of Oregon's newly created campus police department. "High-tech devices are particular favorites of those with light fingers," she says. "If a student studying in the library momentarily gets up and leaves a cell phone or iPad on their study table, chances are the device will be gone by the time the student gets back."

To improve the university's ability to respond effectively to law-enforcement issues, the school recently began transitioning its public-safety department to an actual police department. At the same time, they also decided to replace their aging dispatch equipment with Zetron's IP-based MAX Dispatch system. The new system offers numerous advantages over their old system, including improved interoperability and the ability to dispatch remotely when events require it.

The University of Oregon

Located in Eugene, a city in Oregon's Willamette Valley, the University of Oregon is a public university with a student body of approximately 25,000. It has been classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a very high research activity (RU/VH) university, the highest classification for an academic institution. It is also one of only two Association of American Universities (AAU) members in the Pacific Northwest.

Improving campus safety and security

Previously, the University of Oregon's safety and security were overseen by its public safety department. Recently, however, the Oregon Legislature changed state law to make possible the creation of campus police departments. This allows the University of Oregon to be on par with every other AAU institution and nearly every other school in the country with 15,000 or more students.

A major advantage to being a police department is that it improves access to law-enforcement information that officers, dispatchers, and analysts use to respond to incidents and trends, investigate crimes, and craft effective prevention strategies.

"Being able to share data, work with our law-enforcement peers, and act quickly greatly improves our ability to protect and serve our campus effectively," says Interim Police Chief Carolyn McDermed.

New dispatch equipment

Although the decision to replace the police department's dispatch system wasn't directly related to the agency's upgrade in status, it was a change they sorely needed—their existing Zetron button-based console was almost 25 years old.

"The Zetron console had served the campus well," says the university's senior RF engineer, Mike Smith. "But it was becoming antiquated, and parts were getting hard to find. Plus, there were some things we really wanted that the old system couldn't provide. We wanted to be able to add positions easily and inexpensively. We also wanted to be able to run remote dispatch positions at campus events."

Reasons for choosing MAX

The university issued a request for proposals for a new IP-based dispatch system, and after considering a number of systems, they chose Zetron's MAX Dispatch. Smith explains why.

"For one thing, we had a budget, and the MAX system fit it," he says. "I also have a long history with Zetron products, and I've always been impressed by their engineering and performance. In addition, MAX integrates well with Kenwood products, so it would be able to support the campus's existing Kenwood radio infrastructure. And I liked the migration path from current to newer technologies Zetron presented to me."

Both Smith and Wilborn say that the MAX system's interoperability was also a key factor.

"The campus police department has to be able to utilize three different radio networks on campus," says Smith, "a P25 [Project 25] system that the campus police use, and analog conventional and trunking systems other campus entities use. MAX supports them all."

"Because of its patching capabilities" adds Wilborn, "the MAX system would also allow our regular officers who use digital radios and our auxiliary officers who use analog radios to talk to each other."

The solution

The MAX Dispatch system the university chose includes five positions: two positions for primary dispatch—with a third to be added after they move to a larger space; another position for backup; and a laptop-based position for remote dispatch.

Easy migration

The implementation of the new system was straightforward, smooth and didn't interrupt the agency's ongoing operations. "I installed the console system and other necessary equipment in a room adjacent to the one where normal operations were taking place," says Smith. "Then I just shut off the old system and turned on the new one."

"The transition to the new system was seamless," says Wilborn. "We just went from one system to the other."

'A huge improvement'

The system has been live since late June, and according to Wilborn, it is "...working great. It's a wonderful upgrade for us. Mike [Smith] did a great job setting it up."

Smith appreciates the system's reliability: "Even though it's relatively new," he says, "once it was installed, I was able to take a vacation to Hawaii, and I didn't get a single call!"

But perhaps the most important review of the system comes from Tyler Maness, one of the dispatchers who uses it daily. He's particularly fond of the system's intelligent user interface: "The MAX screen is very flexible," he says. "It lets us change things around and display them exactly the way we want to. It's a huge improvement over what we had before!"

The upshot is that University of Oregon not only has a police department that is improving its campus law-enforcement capabilities, but also a dispatch system that is able to provide the technological support these expanded capabilities require. ■

"The MAX screen is very flexible. It lets us change things around and display them exactly the way we want to."

*Tyler Maness, Dispatcher
Univ. of Oregon Police Dept.*

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.



MAX Call-Taking's intelligent user interface helps dispatcher Dorothy Wild focus on her tasks.

"We couldn't have asked for a better installation or higher levels of responsiveness."

Sheriff Randy Forsyth, Benton County, Iowa

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." ■



Zetron's new MAX Call-Taking gives you the solid reliability and performance you expect from Zetron in a breakthrough, Next Generation 9-1-1 system. MAX Call-Taking is SIP-standards-based, ready to meet i3 industry standards and is scalable for multiple PSAPs.

- Next Generation i3 9-1-1 Ready
- Intelligent UI
- Automatic Call Recovery
- Advanced Call Handling
- 99.999% Availability
- Individual or "Hosted" Designs

MAX Dispatch Offers Arkansas PD Updated Functionality, NEXEDGE Integration

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“[B]ecause MAX Dispatch integrates seamlessly with NEXEDGE, our upcoming migration to the citywide network will be easy.”

Ken Farmer, Police Chief,
Bella Vista Police Dept.

“My grandfather started the business in the early days of AM radio,” says owner Michael Smith, “but now our focus is public safety. We provide communications equipment for police, fire, and ambulance services throughout northwest Arkansas and parts of Oklahoma and Missouri. We also provide systems for utilities and manufacturing businesses throughout our area.”

The winning details

Smith Two-Way Radio’s proposal won the project in part because theirs was the only one that included NEXEDGE capability. But Bella Vista’s positive experiences with Smith Two-Way Radio and Zetron were decisive factors as well.

“Our previous Zetron system ran reliably for years,” says Farmer. “Zetron also has an excellent reputation throughout the industry, so we were happy to go with their latest dispatch product. We also have a positive, long-standing relationship with Smith Two-Way Radio. They installed and maintained our previous system, and we’ve been very happy with it.”

One position at a time

Once the new equipment arrived onsite, Smith Two-Way Radio went about installing it one position at a time.

Jeff Henretty, a field supervisor for Smith Two-Way Radio, says they moved one dispatcher from her position to a temporary location so she would be able to answer phones and back up the other dispatcher while the installation was underway. In a matter of hours, the first position was removed and replaced with new furniture and the MAX Dispatch console. The position was then brought up to service, tested, and run overnight.

“The next day,” says Henretty, “we touched up a few details and made sure everything checked out. We then went through the same process with the second position.”

It wasn’t long before both positions were up and running smoothly.

Experts in IP

For many radio technicians, the transition from analog to IP-based technology can be somewhat daunting. But not for Smith Two-Way Radio. “Our technicians have been concentrating on IP for at least five years,” says Smith. “They’re experts at it, so installing Bella Vista’s new IP-based MAX system was ‘old hat’ to them.”

Paging and door controls

The system was set up to tone out pages and control the lobby entry door from the console. Henretty explains how this was done.

“We worked with their tone groups to make sure tones were going out correctly to everyone,” he says. “This required only a bit of programming; Zetron tech support gave us some great help with this. We also programmed the system to allow the dispatchers to control the door right from the console. They just tap an indicator on the screen, and the door opens.”

‘A future-ready, IP-based console’

The Bella Vista PD’s cutover to the MAX Dispatch system was completed successfully in April of 2012. Michael Smith says it offers many features that Bella Vista is excited about, including “...more coverage, more channels, and a future-ready, IP-based console.”

“The MAX system offers the updated benefits we were looking for,” adds Farmer. “It’s so user friendly that our dispatchers took to it right away. And because it integrates with NEXEDGE, our upcoming migration to the citywide network will be easy. Looking even farther into the future, I anticipate that we’ll be adding dispatch positions because we’re a growing city. With the MAX system, it will be very easy for us to expand as we need to.” ■



Integrated Solutions Based on Open Standards

Manage the Call from Start to Finish

Zetron’s MAX Solutions gives you an integrated suite of systems you can use from the second the call comes in to the moment help is dispatched to the scene. You can use them together or separately. MAX Solutions includes:

- **MAX Call-Taking:** Intelligent, Next-Gen i3 9-1-1 call handling.
- **MAX CAD:** Intuitive, cutting-edge functionality.
- **MAX Mobile CAD:** Faster response times.
- **MAX Mapping:** Seamless call handling.
- **MAX Dispatch:** Streamlined operations.



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