Photo courtesy of Chuck Kimmerle, University of North Dakota

The Student Wellness Center is one of the many buildings monitored by the UND Operations Center.

MAX Dispatch Controls Vital Operations at University of North Dakota

The MAX Dispatch system recently installed at the Univ. of North Dakota Operations Center helps control the university's vast network of critical services. The system's IP functionality also supports the center's plan to place consoles at different locations throughout the campus.

With an annual enrollment of over 15,000 and roughly 200 fields of academic and professional study, the University of North Dakota (UND) is one of the Midwest's leading learning institutions. As such, it's a hub for the full range of activities and events usually associated with life on a busy university campus. Less obvious is the network of services that function behind the scenes to support the university's safety and security, law enforcement, transportation, and facilities. While the delivery of these services might go unnoticed by most casual observers, UND couldn't function without them.

For many years, the communications center that oversees these services used a dispatch system dating back to the mid-1980s to manage and coordinate their operations. But university administrators recently realized they were beginning to require features that only newer technology could provide. They decided to obtain a new system that would provide updated features and functionality and the flexibility to decentralize the placement of some of their dispatch consoles. The new Zetron MAX Dispatch system that went live in June of 2013 is delivering on all counts.

One center, four business units

The UND Operations Center supports four separate business units: the bus transportation service, parking and parking enforcement, facilities management, and the campus police.

"We dispatch repair crews and oversee all of the university's automated monitoring and control systems," says operations center supervisor, Pamela Zimbelman. "This includes fire and security alarms, and heating and air conditioning systems. Although each of the business units operates on its own, being able to manage them through the center makes for a more coordinated effort."

This is no small feat given the sheer physical size of the university. The campus comprises 6.5 million square feet spread over 585 acres. It has 234 buildings, including an airport for the aviation school, a research center, a medical school, a law school, a business school, and 11 colleges.

MAX Dispatch takes the lead

Once the operations center administrators decided they needed new dispatch equipment, they set about defining what it should include. They then issued a request for proposals.

Randall Bohlman, UND's technology advancement coordinator, says that as they looked at a multitude of possible systems, a proposal submitted by Zetron reseller Stan's Communications and featuring Zetron's MAX Dispatch system emerged as the leading contender. "The MAX system offered IP-based features that would take care of our needs now and well into the future, and it came in at the best price," says Bohlman. "It would also be installed and maintained by Stan's Communications, a very experienced and trusted local vendor."

Based in Grand Forks, North Dakota, Stan's Communications has been providing total communications solutions to law-enforcement, public-safety, and private-sector customers throughout the Red River Valley for over 50 years.

Positive reviews from Minnkota

A visit to view an installation of MAX Dispatch at the Minnkota Power Co-op in Grand Forks reinforced the sense that MAX Dispatch was the best choice for the UND. "Minnkota's administrators and dispatchers all gave the MAX system very positive reviews," says Zimbelman. "They told us they liked its features and how easy it is to learn and use. Based on this and all of our other criteria, we chose MAX Dispatch."

Room to expand

The solution for UND included two positions of MAX Dispatch that would immediately be installed in the operations center. It also provided the capability to add six more positions when UND's budget would allow it. Five would be installed at various locations throughout the university. The sixth would be a mobile position that could be set up anywhere if an emergency forced them to evacuate the main center. MAX Dispatch not only makes it extremely easy to add positions, but its remote command-and-control capabilities allow mobile positions to be set up quickly and securely, wherever and whenever they're needed.

An easy install

Mike Bartholome, a technician with Stan's Communications, oversaw the installation of MAX Dispatch at the UND operations center. He says that running the new and old systems in parallel allowed the installation to take place without interrupting any of the center's operations.

"We kept the consoles and equipment rack for the existing system running in one room while we set up the new rack and consoles in another," he says. "Then we set up and configured the new system and brought it online, one console at a time. It all went without a hitch."

> The [MAX Dispatch] system… does a **great job** of **supporting our separate business units** while allowing us to consolidate operations… It's a **perfect fit for our needs and budget.**

Pamela Zimbelman
Operations Ctr. Supervisor,
Office of Emergency Management,
Department of Public Safety,
University of North Dakota

Dispatchers Tina Richards and Rose Nottingham monitor multiple screens at Clay County's new 9-1-1 Center.

Easy, Flexible MAX Dispatch 'Perfect' for New PSAP

Clay County, West Virginia recently chose Zetron's MAX Dispatch system to equip their new 9-1-1 and dispatch center. The system was chosen for its flexibility, competitive price and easy operation.

In the summer of 2012, the commissioners of Clay County, West Virginia, decided to take their county's 9-1-1 call-taking and dispatching into their own hands. That is, they made the decision to stop paying another county to provide these services and to start doing it themselves. Their rationale was simple: For what it would cost to continue to contract those services out, Clay could handle them within their county. But this meant setting up a brand-new public safety answering point (PSAP) and equipping it with the best communications systems their budget would allow. They set about doing just that.

Clay County, WV
Situated in the heart of West Virginia, Clay County is mostly rural. It has a population of about 9,000 and covers an area of about 344 square miles. Coal mining remains one of Clay County's principal industries.

Prior to December of 2012, neighboring Nicholas County had been contracted to handle Clay County's 9-1-1 call-taking and dispatching. This arrangement worked well enough—until Nicholas County decided to build a new 9-1-1 center and wanted to increase the fees they were charging Clay County.

Clay County's commissioners put their heads together, ran some numbers, and determined that it would be more cost effective to set up their own PSAP. Doing so would also add 20 much-needed jobs to Clay County's employment rolls.

Getting the PSAP started
Because Clay County was new to the business of setting up and equipping a PSAP, deciding exactly what to look for in their new communications equipment posed some challenges at first. In fact, they hadn't yet hired their 9-1-1 director when they issued their request for proposals (RFP) for new communication equipment. Nonetheless, as the process unfolded, flexibility and affordability emerged as two of the top requirements their new equipment would have to meet.

Denver Brown was hired as Clay County's 9-1-1 director in time to review proposals as they came in. He explains some of the factors that drove their criteria for the new system. "Because we're such a small county," he says, "cost was very important to us. Flexibility and ease of use were also considerations. We'd sent all of our new dispatchers to another center to observe their operations. We wanted our system to be flexible enough to mimic operations the dispatchers had observed in order to make it easier for them to get up to speed on the new system."

'A perfect solution'
Hughes Supply Company (HSC) responded to Clay County's RFP with a proposal based on Zetron's MAX Dispatch system. Headquartered in Beckley, WV, HSC's diverse products and services include providing and supporting two-way communications solutions for public safety and the mining industry.

Steve Dinkler, HSC's communications systems manager, says they based their bid for the project on MAX Dispatch because it was "…a perfect solution for Clay County. Compared to other systems, MAX Dispatch is less expensive, does more, and is easier to install and maintain."

Dinkler admits that, at one point, he considered including a different IP-based dispatch product in his bid "… but it cost $20,000 to $30,000 more than the MAX system, and it didn't offer more."

Another factor was his past experience with Zetron and its products and services. "Zetron's technical staff always gives us terrific service and support. They're easy to reach, they really understand their products, and they help us resolve issues quickly."

Choosing MAX
After reviewing the proposals, Denver Brown recommended to Clay County's commissioners that they select HSC's bid consisting of four positions of MAX Dispatch system—three positions for regular dispatching and one administrator position. The commissioners voted on and approved his recommendation.

Installing the system
Before anything else could happen, the space for the new center had to be refurbished and renovated to public-safety standards. Once this phase was completed, Dinkler and his technicians were able to start installing the new dispatch equipment.

They set the system up to support four radios—one each for fire, law enforcement, and EMS, and a spare radio in case any one of the others goes down. Dinkler also added another critical feature.

"We put West Virginia's state trunking system in the new dispatch system even though it wasn't in the bid specs and I didn't charge for it," he says. "MAX Dispatch is already highly interoperable. But connecting to the state trunking system will give Clay County additional interoperability with most other agencies throughout the state. Although they don't need this functionality at all times, it can be critical during a large-scale weather event or incident that involves multiple agencies. Due to budget constraints, Clay County is able to control only a few channels on the trunking system right now, but they'll eventually have full control."

Set up for easy learning
In accordance with the project specifications and to help make the system easy to learn, HSC technicians set it up to use tones and channel-selection processes similar to those used at the center where the dispatchers had done their observations. The system's intuitive user interface also enabled the dispatchers to learn and use it very quickly.

"Steve Dinkler trained me, then I trained the dispatchers," says Brown. "But MAX Dispatch is so easy to use that the dispatchers— who'd never done dispatching before— just sat down at the equipment and started using it."

Meet and greet
The communication center and its equipment and staff were in place for about a month before the PSAP opened for business. This gave everyone—from the administrators to the dispatchers to the technical staff— time to thoroughly settle in before the center went public.

Then, on November 27, 2012, Clay County 9-1-1 held an open house so members of the community, including the town leadership and local media, could tour the new facility. The open house was a great success; those who attended were pleased and impressed with what they saw.

A week later, the center went live, and it's been up and running ever since.

'Completely satisfied'
When asked his opinion of the system, Denver Brown has nothing but praise for it and those who provided and installed it. "I'm completely satisfied with MAX Dispatch," he says. "It meets all of our criteria and expectations. I knew if we went with HSC and Zetron we'd be getting great service and a reliable product. And I haven't been disappointed." ∎

" Compared to other systems, MAX Dispatch is **less expensive**, does more, and is **easier to use**, install and maintain."

Steve Dinkler
Communications Manager
Hughes Supply Company

Zetron's flexible, IP-based MAX Dispatch supports easy expansion, resource sharing across systems, and increased mobility and remote options. It also provides an easy, cost-effective migration path from legacy to emerging technologies.

- **Streamlined UI:** Displays information pertinent to the task at hand. Reduces clutter. Minimizes operational steps.
- **High reliability:** End-to-end network redundancy keeps the system up and running even if the IP network goes down.
- **Easy installation and maintenance:** Continuously monitors network performance. Supports remote configuration and maintenance.
- **Flexible, scalable:** Utilizes centralized and distributed architectures. Scales from a single LAN to a multi-node, geographically diverse WAN. Adapts to evolving technologies.

MAX Call-Taking and Dispatch Deliver Quality and Affordability

Installing Zetron's IP-based MAX Dispatch and Call-Taking systems has greatly improved the ease and accuracy of public-safety communications in Caddo County, OK. It also prepares them for the future and will allow them to adapt as technology and their needs change.

Several years ago, when Debbie Davis was hired as Caddo County's first 9-1-1 director, she was immediately given several nearly Herculean tasks. She was put in charge of finding, setting up, equipping, and staffing an entirely new public safety answering point (PSAP) and dispatch center. She also had to assign new addresses throughout the entire county. Davis took it all on with great dedication, courage and tenacity. The happy result is that all of the residences and businesses in Caddo County now have official street addresses. And Caddo County's new PSAP is up and running and equipped with Zetron's state-of-the-art IP-based MAX Dispatch and Call-Taking systems.

Davis says with pride that the new equipment has taken Caddo County from being "…behind the times to being at the very forefront" when it comes to their public safety communications.

'It had to be done'

The address re-assignment project was Davis's first as she took up the reins as Caddo County's 9-1-1 director.

She explains why this was such a high priority: "Before we had street addresses, we only had routes and box numbers," she says. "So it was often very difficult for first responders to find the location of an emergency, especially if it happened at night on a backroad. This was a real problem because we have a lot of hunting and other recreation in the county. We need to be able to find hunters and offroad enthusiasts if they get into trouble, which they often do. To remedy the situation, I had to assign and record new addresses throughout Caddo County. Not everyone welcomed this, so it wasn't easy, but it had to be done. And it's a good thing we did it; it has greatly improved our ability to respond to emergencies."

Learning the ropes

Davis's next major project was to set up a new 9-1-1 and dispatch center. Although she was an experienced dispatcher, she knew nothing about how to establish and equip a communication center. So she set out to learn everything she could about what this should entail.

She attended OK NENA/APCO—Oklahoma's National Emergency Number Association (NENA) and Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) conference. She talked to suppliers and watched demos. She grilled other directors about the equipment they were using, what they liked, what they didn't, and why. And she asked which vendors would be best to provide new equipment.

This is where Davis learned about Oklahoma City-based Stolz Telecom. "Everyone had great things to say about Stolz," she says. "They'd equipped a center at nearby Garvin County, so I went to their open house. The director there had nothing but praise for Stolz."

Davis discovered that many local centers were using Zetron equipment and were very happy with it. She also heard a lot of positive buzz about Zetron's MAX Dispatch and Call-Taking systems. "Many directors encouraged me to buy the MAX systems," she says. "They told me they'd buy the systems in a heartbeat if they were in a position to do so."

An IP-based, turnkey solution

Based on her research, Davis issued a request for proposals (RFP) for an IP-based turnkey solution that would include dispatch and call-taking systems.

One key criterion was that the solution be able to support a remote call-taking position at Anadarko PD. It would connect over microwave to the main center's servers.

The winning proposal

Stolz Telecom submitted a proposal that hit all the right notes. It included three positions of MAX Dispatch and two positions of MAX Call-Taking to be installed at Caddo County 9-1-1 and a third position of MAX Call-Taking that would be installed at the Anadarko PD. Last but not least, the proposal included Stolz Telecom's highly reputable support. Stolz Telecom won the project.

The installation gets underway

It was several months before the actual equipment installation could begin because the space chosen for the new center had to be completely gutted and remodeled. And there were several delays in this process. But as soon as this was done, Stolz Telecom began their work.

"Because of the scope of the project and number of people involved, our biggest challenge was coordinating with other contractors so we didn't interfere with what they were doing,"

Caddo County dispatchers like Hayley Twedell handle both call-taking and dispatching at their workstations.

> **"**Thanks to the new MAX systems, Caddo County is **Next-Gen ready** and has… the flexibility to **expand easily and affordably."**
>
> *Rob Stolz,* Vice President, Stolz Telecom

says Stolz Telecom V.P., Rob Stolz. "But it all went very smoothly. We installed the furniture, then the backroom equipment. We also constructed a new radio tower and set up a microwave connection from the servers at Caddo County to the third call-taking position at Anadarko PD. We were able to do this very cost effectively because of MAX Call-Taking's IP functionality."

Easy to learn

Once the equipment had been installed and thoroughly tested, training began.

"Zetron came down and provided a day of training," says Davis. "Then, it was hands on. Many of the dispatchers were new to this type of equipment, but it's so intuitive, they caught on and were able to use it very quickly. And if we had questions, we just called or emailed Stolz, and they'd give us the answers."

High quality, Next-Gen ready

The new center, which went live February 4, 2013, is delivering important short-term and long-term benefits to Caddo County.

"Thanks to the new MAX systems, Caddo County is Next-Gen ready, has the turnkey solution they were seeking and the flexibility to expand easily and affordably," says Stolz. "Plus, if they ever want to add a dispatch position at Anadarko, we can just load the software, and they'll be up and running. Zetron is constantly adding new features to the MAX platform," he continues. "That's really going to serve the customer well over time. I doubt Caddo County could have gotten such high quality and future-readiness from any other manufacturer."

"Comparing the old and new equipment is like the difference between night and day," adds Davis. "And Stolz is a great vendor— they gave us great help selecting and installing it. I don't think there's anything more advanced than MAX." ∎

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 scalable for multiple PSAPs.

- State-of-the-art UI
- Skills-based routing
- Automatic Call Recovery
- IP-based flexibility
- Stand-alone or hosted design

MAX Dispatch Controls Vital Operations at University of North Dakota

Photo courtesy of Shawna Widdel, University of North Dakota

George Finn and Whitney Borreson perform their dispatching tasks at the UND Operations Center.

Minimal training required

Because the MAX Dispatch user interface is so intuitive, bringing the dispatchers up to speed on how to use it required only minimal training.

"Training was quick and easy," says Zimbelman. "Once the system was installed and ready, our dispatchers were able to catch onto it and use it without having to undergo extended formal training. That's a great feature for us to have moving forward as we add more dispatchers. And it's another reason why we chose the MAX system."

Enhancing safety and security

One of adaptations of MAX Dispatch for UND involved integrating the operation center building's door controls into the consoles. "We have to be up and running 24/7, so the operators are here by themselves at all hours," says Zimbelman. "To keep the environment safe and secure, we have three sets of door switches incorporated into the consoles. This allows the dispatchers to control the doors directly from their positions."

Happy with the system

The UND operations center's new MAX Dispatch system is delivering amply on the features and functionality for which it was chosen.

"We're very happy with the system," says Zimbelman. "Our dispatchers especially like the recording feature. We monitor transmissions between the campus police and central dispatch. If we ever need to assist them but missed the original transmission, we can instantly play it back so we know the situation and what we need to do and how we can help. The system also does a great job of supporting our separate business units while allowing us to consolidate operations if we ever need to during an emergency. It's a perfect fit for our needs and budget." ∎

Zetron's Remote Command-and-Control Suite Wins 2013 Hot Product Award

Zetron's new Remote Command-and-Control Suite has been named one of the Hot Products of 2013 by *Public Safety Communications* (PSC) magazine, the official publication of the Association of Public Safety Officials (APCO) International. The award recognizes the year's most innovative public-safety communications products.

'Easy... intuitive'

The selection was based on recommendations provided by PSC's team of experts at the APCO International Conference in Anaheim, CA, in August 2013. Reviewers called the Remote Command-and-Control Suite "...a great option for tactical dispatchers [and] emergency evacuation situations." They also noted that the system is "...very easy and intuitive for the end user."

Affordable, flexible

The Remote Command-and-Control Suite brings new flexibility to public-safety communications. Its use of wi-fi and LTE technologies allows agencies to run Zetron's Advanced Communications (Acom) System, MAX Dispatch, MAX Call-Taking, and Mobile CAD on tablet PCs or laptops at remote locations. This gives customers the flexibility to deploy remote, temporary, backup and mobile operations quickly and securely. This is done with the full features, functionality, and interoperability these systems provide in the control room.

"We're very pleased that the Remote Command-and-Control Suite has won the 2013 Hot Product Award," said Zetron V.P. of Product Management, Kathy Broadwell. "The suite allows agencies to take their operations wherever they're needed and at an affordable price. This gives customers added flexibility, whether that means setting up dispatch onsite at a major event, conducting remote call-taking during a natural disaster, or setting up a backup site if the main center must be evacuated."

UPCOMING TRADE SHOWS

CAL NENA
January 24 - 29, 2014 | San Diego, CA

GA ECC
March 10 - 11, 2014 | Athens, GA

IWCE
March 14 - 15, 2014 | Las Vegas, NV

Pennsylvania APCO
April 6 - 9, 2014 | Lancaster, PA

For Zetron factory training, please contact Zetron before scheduling as dates are subject to change.

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