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# THE ZETRON ADVANTAGE

## A New Era for Tioga County



**Doubling Down**

Licking County, OH

**Weathering the Storm**

Powell County, KY



# Zetron Systems Usher in New Era for Tioga County

*Tioga County Emergency Services Director, David Cohick, consults with dispatcher, David Lacher, on a call.*

**The Zetron AcomEVO and MAX Call-Taking systems recently installed in Tioga County Pennsylvania's new 9-1-1 center provide the PSAP with a single-vendor solution that will allow them to share resources and backup operations across counties.**

On June 3, 2015, the following radio announcement went out from David Cohick, Director of the Tioga County, Pennsylvania, Emergency Services Department, to the area's public-safety and law-enforcement agencies and first responders:

*"In 1979 the Department of Emergency Services started operations in the basement of the Tioga County Courthouse... Over the past 36 years, the facility has handled over 1 million incidents and received several million phone calls for assistance. This is Tioga County Emergency Services at the court house signing off the air."*

Moments later, the voice of Tioga County Quality Assurance Director, Lisa Rice, came on the air:

*"Tioga County—all cars, stations, and departments: This is Tioga County Emergency Services... signing on the air from the top of the hill, 99 William Farrell Drive. We did it, Bob."*

This was a momentous occasion for Tioga County Emergency Services and its 9-1-1 public safety answering point (PSAP). It signaled the completion of their move from their old communication center to an entirely new facility. It also marked their cutover to the center's state-of-the-art Zetron AcomEVO dispatch and IP-based MAX Call-Taking systems.

The "Bob" named in the second transmission was a reference to the late Robert R. Saylor, Tioga County's first emergency services director. He had been instrumental in creating the area's first emergency communication center. Although Saylor had passed away five years previously, he was on everyone's minds. This new center was something he would have wanted to see.

It was the end of an era for Tioga County. And the beginning of a new one.

## **Tioga County 9-1-1**

Operating under the auspices of the Tioga County Department of Emergency Services, the Tioga County 9-1-1 Communications Center answers 9-1-1 calls and provides law-enforcement, ambulance, and public-safety dispatch for Tioga and Potter counties and several additional townships nearby. The center serves a population of about 90,000 and covers an area of 2,550 square miles—the largest geographic public-safety service area in the state.

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**“The updated Zetron equipment provides new capabilities that are critical to us now and will become even more so in the future. It’s state-of-the-art everything.”**

*David Cohick, Director, Emergency Services, Tioga County, PA*

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## The need for change

Cohick explains why the time had come to set up and equip a new emergency services and 9-1-1 center. “Our dispatchers were elbow to elbow, and we had no room to grow,” he says. “Our location in the basement was vulnerable to flooding, and our equipment was not designed to take us to the next level of technology and service. We also felt it was important to move to IP-based systems that would allow us to share operations, resources, and backup across agencies. It was also the perfect time to adopt new 9-1-1 call-taking that will help prepare us for next-generation functionality, such as the ability to accept video and text, so we’ll be ready when the time comes for us to support it.”

## Zetron is the vendor of choice

Zetron’s AcomEVO dispatch system and MAX Call-Taking systems were at the top of Tioga County’s list when it came to selecting equipment for their new center.

“Zetron was clearly the vendor of choice, based on the equipment itself and Tioga’s past experiences with Zetron,” says Mike McGrady of MCM Consulting Group, who assisted with the project. “Moving to Zetron’s latest-and-greatest would be an easier transition for their staff. Plus, having a single vendor for both systems would simplify maintenance, reduce costs, and give them a single point of contact for any questions or issues that might arise.”

AcomEVO and MAX Call-Taking also offered the top-of-the-line IP-based functionality and features Tioga County was seeking.

An additional bit of serendipity made Zetron’s AcomEVO even more attractive. Potter County no longer needed their existing Acom system. So Tioga would purchase it for their new center and keep their existing Acom running in the old center until the new center was cut over. This would allow them to continue their operations without interruption, even as the new center was being built and equipped. Tioga would also be able to upgrade the system in the new center very cost effectively to AcomEVO—which is a newer version of Acom.

Tioga County finalized their decision to purchase seven positions of AcomEVO and seven of MAX Call-Taking, as well as the attendant software and equipment required for each system.

## Streamlined, simplified operations

Zetron engineer Doug Neal oversaw the system engineering and project implementation, with Tu-Way Communications of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, assisting with the installation.

The first phase involved removing the Acom system from Potter County and installing it at Tioga’s new center. The system was then updated with all of the necessary cards and software upgrades.

MAX Call-Taking was installed and integrated with AcomEVO. The equipment was then set up to allow dispatchers to control four computers and up to 16 screens with a single headset, keyboard, and mouse. “This functionality alone would have sold me on this equipment,” says Cohick. “I can’t emphasize enough the extent to which it streamlines and simplifies our operations and gives us seamless control of all these systems.”

## Minimal training

To reduce the impact of change on dispatchers, the screens and icons on the AcomEVO system were designed to mimic those on their previous system. As a result, dispatchers were able to make the transition to AcomEVO with minimal training. Because the MAX Call-Taking user interface is quite different from the Zetron Series 3300 system Tioga had been using previously, it required more training. But thanks to the system’s intuitive design and operation, dispatchers caught onto it quickly as well.

## ‘Our dispatchers are beyond happy’

From all accounts, the project has been a great success.

“It was a fabulous deployment,” says Neal, “one of the best I’ve had.”

Dave Cohick concurs: “The transition was easy, thanks to the excellence of the systems, the great job Zetron did, and the efforts of our staff. Lisa Rice was instrumental in helping to develop the screen layouts that are so important to our dispatchers. Ever since the new center went online, everything has been working flawlessly.”

“Our dispatchers are beyond happy,” Cohick continues. “When they came in and sat down, and compared our dark, cramped old center to the new one, they said it’s like night and day. I’m very pleased. The updated Zetron equipment provides new capabilities that are critical to us now and will become more so in the future. It’s state-of-the-art everything.”

## Grand opening

The grand opening of the new center September 11, 2015 was greeted with great fanfare. Members of the community, the media, and local and state government were all in attendance. Hundreds showed up to tour and admire the new facility.

What David Cohick didn’t realize when he was being interviewed for this story, and what was revealed during the dedication ceremony, is that the new facility would be named to honor his many years of service to Tioga County. Its official name: The David Cohick Emergency Operations Center.■

# Ohio PSAP Doubles Down with MAX Dispatch and Call-Taking



*The Licking County Courthouse dresses up for the holidays.*

**Long-time Zetron customer, Licking County, Ohio, recently chose Zetron's MAX Dispatch and MAX Call-Taking systems to equip their new regional communication center with forward-looking, IP-based solutions.**

Public-safety agencies have a lot riding on their communications equipment. The slightest glitch, delay, or misunderstanding in a message or transmission can have dire consequences. By the same token, a reliable solution from a trusted vendor can make all the difference.

That's why it's no small thing that the 9-1-1 and dispatch center in Licking County, Ohio, has been a loyal Zetron customer for nearly 20 years.

Licking County 9-1-1 purchased their first Zetron dispatch system in 1997, and upgraded to a new Zetron system in 2005. Recently they upgraded again. This time they chose Zetron's IP-based MAX Dispatch and MAX Call-Taking systems to equip their brand-new 9-1-1 center. There's no question that the solid performance and

reliability of their Zetron equipment throughout the years played a major role in their decision to select Zetron equipment for their new center. But additional significant factors also influenced the decision.

## **Licking County, Ohio**

Situated in the geographic center of Ohio, Licking County has a population of approximately 166,500, and an area of about 687 square miles. The Licking County Regional Communication Center located in Newark, Ohio, houses the area's 9-1-1 and dispatch center. The 9-1-1 center answers emergency 9-1-1 calls and provides dispatch services for county fire departments, emergency medical services (EMS), the sheriff, and all but four of the larger municipal police departments in the county.

## **The move to build a new center**

Discussions to purchase and equip a new public-safety facility for Licking County began in about 2011, but it took several years for the project to get off the ground. "We looked at and decided on several locations," says Kevin Carver, Deputy Director for Licking County EMA/9-1-1. "Finally in about 2013 we settled on a building that we felt would best suit us."

## Zetron's winning combination

With the selection of a site, the project was underway.

Licking County issued a request for proposals for communication systems to equip the new center. Zetron responded and won the project with a bid based on its MAX Dispatch and MAX Call-Taking systems.

"Zetron had a great track record with us—very reliable," explains Licking County 9-1-1 Technical Coordinator, David Ruton. "That was important. But in addition to that, the MAX systems met our requirement that the equipment be IP-based. Our transmitter site is remote, so it made sense to use IP instead of old technology to connect to each different radio we need to talk to. In addition, Zetron offered the best quality at the best price. That's a hard combination to beat."

## Designing for the present, planning for the future

The first phase of the project involved gutting the new building and remodeling and repurposing it into a facility that would fully support public-safety communication activities and those who perform them.

"We had to design and plan not only for what we want and need now," says Carver, "but also what we're going to need down the road. So we increased our dispatch positions from the four we'd had previously to eight, and we purchased 14 positions of MAX Call-Taking."

## Implementation and training

With his technical expertise, Dave Ruton was able to drive and oversee the purchase and installation of the new MAX Dispatch and Call-Taking systems.

"The Zetron equipment arrived even before the furniture," he says. "But that was fine because I was able to stage the MAX Dispatch system in a separate, empty room before the final install."

Ruton had never installed a phone system before. But he says that the training he received at Zetron prepared him well for the process of installing MAX Call-Taking. Zetron also sent an engineer to assist him with the system installation and programming. "Because this was my first time installing a call-taking system, I was grateful for the support," he says.

Once both systems were up and running, it took all of a day to train the operators how to use them. As is often the case, the operators' move from their previous Zetron system to MAX Dispatch was a smooth one due to the similarities between the two systems' screens. The fact that MAX Dispatch and Call-Taking are both designed for easy operation also helped.

Licking County 9-1-1 Shift Supervisor, Nate Bryan.

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**“We plan to set up a VPN that will enable us to **operate the Zetron equipment remotely via laptop from any location** with a network connection.”**

*David Ruton, 9-1-1 Technical Coordinator, Licking County, OH*

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## Success... and a bonus

The new Licking County Regional Communication Center and its equipment went live in April of 2014. Both Ruton and Carver are pleased with the reliability and functionality of their new Zetron solutions.

"The systems have been running for over a year, and they're working really well," says Ruton. "They're performing without any problems whatsoever, which is of primary importance to us. And they're giving us the IP connectivity to our radio site we were looking for."

Carver adds that the agency already has plans for the near future that will allow them to take further advantage of the system's IP-based flexibility. "We plan to set up a VPN that will enable us to operate the Zetron equipment remotely via laptop from any location with a network connection," he says.

An added bonus of the project is that the PSAP's previous Zetron Series 4000 dispatch system is not simply being scrapped, but will be assigned to a new home and an updated use. "The Series 4000 is being installed in our mobile-command vehicle," says Ruton. "Not only will it have 22 channels, but it will be able to do just about anything we can do in the 9-1-1 center." ■



# MAX Dispatch Helps Powell County Weather the Storm



**With their new MAX Dispatch system, Powell County 9-1-1 is equipped to respond effectively if problems arise as chemical stockpiles are dismantled. It also helped the agency continue to provide critical services when the area was hit by a major snowfall and subsequent flooding in early 2015.**

The Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP) was created in 1985 to help keep communities near the U.S. Army's aging chemical warfare stockpiles safe while the stockpiles are being dismantled and destroyed. Thirty years after the program's inception, only two of the eight original CSEPP sites remain: one at the Pueblo Chemical Depot in Pueblo, Colorado; and one at the Blue Grass Army Depot in Madison County, Kentucky.

Because of its proximity to the Blue Grass Army Depot, Powell County, Kentucky, is one of the beneficiaries of CSEPP. The new Zetron MAX Dispatch system recently installed at the Powell County 9-1-1 Dispatch Center was funded by CSEPP to ensure both the safety of the chemical stockpile removal and to support the community's ongoing public safety needs.

To date, Powell County has not had an emergency related to the stockpile. But Powell County's new dispatch system is far from idle. It proved itself by keeping the agency up, running, and serving its community during one of the area's worst weather events on record. It is also making the Powell County 9-1-1 and Dispatch Center one of the most effective and best-equipped public safety answering points (PSAPs) in the region.

## **Powell County, Kentucky**

Located in the Eastern Appalachian Mountains, Powell County, Kentucky, is known for its coal fields, scenic parks, and dramatic geology. Its 9-1-1 center answers 9-1-1 calls, provides dispatch services, and assigns emergency and non-emergency calls for all emergency service organizations in Powell County, including CSEPP.

## **Time for a new EOC**

For many years, Powell County's public safety communications took place in a tiny room that was made into a 9-1-1 center as an afterthought. When funds recently became available, local officials made the most of the opportunity. Their plan was to construct a new facility more suited to its purpose as an emergency and 9-1-1 center. This would include replacing their existing analog radio dispatch system with a new, updated, IP-based solution.

## **Reliability, flexibility are key**

FutureCom and Advanced Radio Technology—based in Kentucky and Ohio, respectively—developed a proposal to equip Powell County's new center with Zetron's MAX Dispatch system. Personnel assisting with the effort would include FutureCom owner, Scott Miller; senior sales representative, Ray Carpenter; and Advanced Radio Technology senior technician, Dave Rorer. They won the project for a variety of reasons.

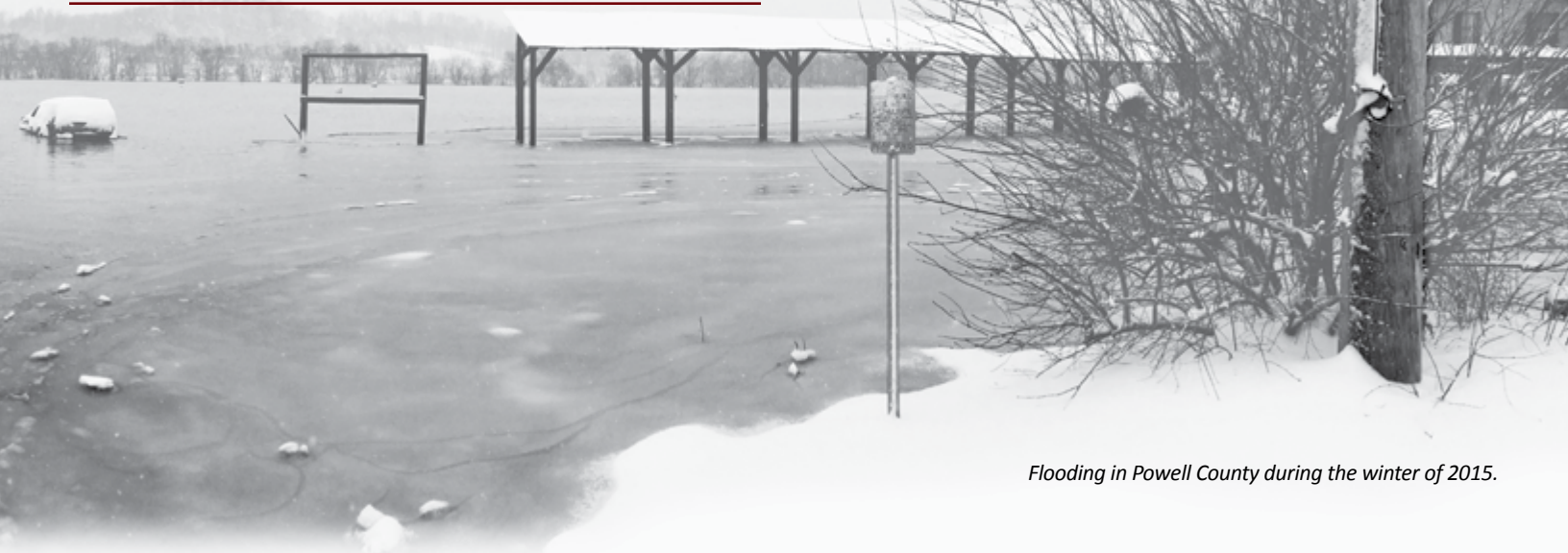
"Selecting FutureCom, Advanced Radio Technology, and Zetron was a no-brainer," says Powell County 9-1-1 Dispatch Director, Cory Graham. "The previous Zetron system Advanced Radio Technology installed for us worked well for many years. Knowing firsthand that a particular product is going to be effective is extremely important to us, and we had faith that the new Zetron solution would offer the same reliability as our previous Zetron system. Plus, MAX Dispatch offered the IP capabilities we were looking for, including the flexibility we might need if we are ever called upon to function as a more regional facility."

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**“ I’m happy to tell any public safety agency...there is no other choice—MAX Dispatch is the way to go.”**

*Cory Graham, Director, Powell Co. 9-1-1 Dispatch*

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*Flooding in Powell County during the winter of 2015.*

“Because MAX Dispatch is highly scalable,” says Dave Rorer, “the customer won’t have to throw the whole thing out and start over if they want to expand, adapt, or upgrade their operations.”

Scott Miller adds that MAX Dispatch was also chosen for its ability to connect to a variety of radio equipment and open-standards-based radio networks. “The project required a highly interoperable system that would integrate with the center’s Kenwood control stations, a Harris P25 [Project 25] trunked system, and, eventually, to a Tait P25 conventional radio network.”

### **“Worst weather in recent memory”**

The first phase of the project involved planning, constructing, and furnishing the new public safety building, all to public safety standards. Once this was completed, the implementation of the MAX Dispatch system got underway. It began in February of 2015, and was completed about a month later.

From all accounts, the equipment installation itself was routine and went very smoothly. But during the final stages of the process, a challenge arose that no one could have anticipated.

Right in the middle of the transition from the old facility to the new one, the area was hit by what Graham describes as “...the worst weather in recent memory.”

“We had nearly three feet of snow in a community where four to five inches is considered substantial,” he says. “This was immediately followed by heavy rains and snow runoff that led to two major floods. Many of us at the center were living in our offices because we couldn’t make it home, including me—I slept at my desk for many nights during the event.”

“What was so great,” Graham continues, “was that, during this nightmare, we were using our old equipment at the old site and our new equipment at the new one. Because MAX Dispatch is so intuitive and easy to learn and use, we were able

to operate seamlessly, bouncing back and forth between the two systems. And this was despite the fact that we were taking on extra responsibilities, from coordinating the efforts of the water department, to getting medications, heating supplies, and food to disabled and elderly people who were trapped by the storms. We kept the EOC operating day and night for seven days—on top of keeping our dispatch operations going during the same time period. I hadn’t even had time to be trained on the MAX Dispatch system when I walked in, queued it up, and used it immediately with no problems whatsoever. It’s a fabulous system.”

### **Rave reviews**

The new MAX Dispatch system and the process that went into installing it are receiving high praise from all involved.

“Zetron territory manager, Maari Adams, was terrific,” says Miller. “She followed up and made sure every question was answered. Zetron’s tech support was also invaluable to us—they are best in the industry, by far.”

“FutureCom and Advanced Radio Technology both did a spectacular job,” adds Graham. “They’re some of the best vendors I’ve ever had the privilege to work with.”

“Responding to our weather this past winter would have been exponentially more difficult if the dispatch system were not as well designed as it is,” Graham continues. “Plus, it offers options that will allow us to extend the reach of our agency if that opportunity should ever arise. I wouldn’t be saying this if I didn’t mean it. I’m happy to tell any public safety agency that, as far as I’m concerned, there’s no other choice—MAX Dispatch is the way to go.” ■

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