

CASE STUDY: Monterey County Emergency Communications Department (ECD)

CUSTOMER PROFILE:

Customer: Monterey County Emergency Communications Department (ECD), Salinas, California

Solutions: NICE Inform™ Multimedia Incident Information Management Solution, NiceLog® Capture Platform, NiceUniverse® Quality Assurance Solution

Results/Benefits: Time savings; efficiency gains; improved service to District Attorneys, supported agencies and citizens; enhanced incident insight; platform for managing new sources of multimedia



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-Lynn Diebold, Director, Monterey County ECD



SITUATION / BACKGROUND

In 2007, the Monterey County (California) Emergency Communications Department (ECD) found itself at a cross roads – between the past and future. As home to the first countywide 9-1-1 system in California, Monterey County embodied innovation. But now, the County was facing new challenges. As the consolidated communications center for 31 agencies serving a half-million people, the ECD fielded hundreds of thousands of calls each year, and a proportionally high volume of requests for information and evidence, too. With new domestic violence laws, those requests were mounting. The ECD team needed a better way to handle the growing workload and satisfy its customers’ service expectations, while preparing for new multimedia challenges down the road. The ECD found a solution in NICE.

THE SOLUTION

The ECD replaced its aging tape-based recording system with NiceLog, a scalable recording solution that combines unlimited online storage for instant accessibility with a powerful GUI that offers simplicity and ease-of-use. With the addition of NICE Inform, the ECD can capture and manage a full spectrum of multimedia information. Incidents can be synchronously reconstructed across various multimedia types (voice, video, and more) and securely shared with DAs and member agencies. NiceUniverse was added for quality assurance (QA), giving ECD supervisors tools to assess service quality and fine tune call handling skills for top notch performance.

THE RESULT

The ECD receives up to 200 records requests each month – from District Attorneys, user agencies, citizens, and the media. NICE has greatly improved the Department’s efficiency in handling these requests. “Research that used to take eight hours can now be done in two or three, a time savings of 75 percent,” notes Lynn Diebold, Director for the Monterey County ECD.

And that’s especially good news, considering that with new domestic violence laws in California, there has been no abatement in requests. In fact, says Diebold, the workload for the ECD Custodian of Records continues to grow year-to-year. “Yet, it’s taking significantly less time and fewer staff hours to handle and respond to those requests,” Diebold reports. It’s easy to see why.

According to the ECD's Records Custodian Dawn Law, the Department's old system was a tape-based system and had time gaps that made it difficult to research and reconstruct incidents. "With our old system, I was constantly behind. With NICE, the speed is phenomenal. I can be done in half a day and then move on to other things. It has freed me up to assist with other projects," she says.

ECD Operations Supervisor Leslie Ragghianti agrees: "The NICE solution has really streamlined our reproduction process and saved a lot of time. Before, when a request came in, we'd have to go to different decks and tapes to pull the information together. Now it's all in one place. We simply put in the date, the time, the radio channel, console or phone number that we're looking for – and it's all there. So the speed NICE's technology delivers has really benefited our department."

Ragghianti also points out that, unlike the new NICE solution, the Department's old system didn't give them authentic incident reconstruction. "When researching an incident, we could end up with 10 separate audio segments for a 6 minute call." With NICE, the ECD Records Custodian can seamlessly reconstruct and save complete scenarios as a single .wav file which can be copied to CD or emailed.

The Department is also looking into further automating the delivery of reproductions to District Attorneys and other customers, through the unique capabilities afforded by NICE Inform.

Diebold explains: "Today when we get a records request, it usually involves printing out a hard copy of the computer-aided dispatch system incident record and then finding the audio associated with that record, whether it's telephone calls or radio. We burn the recordings onto a CD and then someone from the DA's office physically comes to the center to pick it up."

The ECD is now working to establish a new process whereby voice recordings and other information are assembled and stored in incident folders in NICE Inform and then electronically distributed to the DAs. "They'll be able to send us an electronic request, and our Records Custodian will respond by email when it's ready. Then they'll be able to remotely log in and make their own CDs," Diebold explains.

In the not-too-distant future, those same incident folders might contain more than just voice recordings. "We've just recently implemented a way for callers to send us incident scene photos via email, text messages with license plate



numbers, and other information, so that can now be stored in the incident folder along with the audio recordings and the CAD record," Diebold notes. "If there's a need to provide that information, everything will be together in one place."

Diebold sees even more possibilities for improving efficiency and insight in the future. "I can potentially see the value of including video from patrol car cameras for certain types of incidents," she says. "I could see where some of the agencies we support would be interested in that." Diebold also envisions that capturing AVL data along with CAD and radio channel audio could be useful in reconstructing major incidents. "Along with everything else connected to that incident, we'd be able to go back after the fact to determine a unit's response/location at the time of the incident," she explains.

In the final analysis, Diebold says that NICE is helping to position the ECD to provide better service to all of its customers in the future. "It's nice to be on the leading edge for a change, and to be able to respond to an agency's request with 'Yes, we can do that,'" she says.

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