



The Leader in E911 Solutions

Case Study: *County Office*

“Understand ways to automate and work at it. You can do it. Life is an open forum. Work hard, treat people with respect and you will succeed in providing more effective public service.”

Catherine Maras O’Leary, chief information officer at Cook County

Safe Government in the Heartland

In the wake of recent terrorist activities, which have followed a string of workplace and school violence incidents across America, many government leaders are wondering what can be done to protect their citizens when disasters strike.

Cook County, Illinois, responded with one of the most advanced enhanced 911 (E911) crisis response solutions available. In doing so, they also complied with the State of Illinois’ Emergency Telephone System Act, which requires many government agencies, schools and businesses to implement these systems.

By implementing the crisis response system throughout their vast region, Cook County is among the first government entities in the nation to ensure that firemen, ambulance attendants and police can find those in distress when responding to their emergency calls. As a result, county premises are appreciably safer for employees and visitors.

Automation is Essential

Cook County surveyed the market and contracted with RedSky Technologies to implement their centralized E911, call accounting, work order and directory management system.

One of the county’s primary evaluation criteria was the need for a completely automated E911 crisis response system that did not require error-prone manual intervention. They wanted to “set it and forget it and not worry about it,” and this was the only solution that passed this essential requirement.

Today, approximately 24,000 county telephone stations are “automatically” protected with this system, which enables Cook County to transmit E911 information to the E911 information center any time a change is made in their general telephone directory.

For example, if the county creates a new agency and assigns a new set of telephone extensions for people, that information will be passed on to the E911 information center as soon as the county updates its telephone directory. If that new agency will be working in a different building or a different city, the telephone extension and location information can still be easily updated at the county’s central offices. With careful planning, the project was implemented on time and within budget, and serves as a showcase of government efficiency. The implementation process included audit services, E911 software installation, data integration and system testing phases.

Basic 911 vs. E911

So what is the difference between basic 911 and E911? Actually, the difference between the two is significant, especially when someone calling 911 is unable to speak or stay on the telephone.

Under basic 911, an emergency dispatcher knows only the billing address for the phone system from which the call originated. With E911, an emergency dispatcher knows the caller's street address and their specific location such as the west hallway on the 9th floor. "E911 technology automatically provides public safety dispatchers with information to pinpoint the origin of a 911 call," explains Catherine Maras O'Leary, chief information officer at Cook County.

Bottom Line Benefits

Cook County employees and citizens are now benefiting from one of the safest and most automated crisis response systems in the nation. Besides eliminating the risk of human error, the automated system also contributes favorably to the 15 to 20 percent cost reductions that have resulted during Maras O'Leary's tenure.

"Automation and standardization are essential for business and government today," advises Maras O'Leary, who joined Cook County after a 12-year career with GATX. The county essentially viewed their E911 project as a prime opportunity to automate their entire telecommunications system. "Think of it as a piece of the overall telecommunications system. E911 data is pure, so you can store it in a central database for reuse with your call accounting, work order and directory management systems," she says. And there's much more to come for the citizens of Cook County.