



The Leader in E911 Solutions

Case Study: *The Case for E911*

“Dollars aren’t always the deciding factor. It was more a feature- and function-related evaluation. We needed a product that made sense now and later, too. The RedSky Technologies product won hands-down because it was the only one that pulled information directly from the PBX rather than a separate database,” said Paula Graller, Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority’s communications services manager.

The Challenge:

When it comes to deciding whether to implement an E911 system, some basic questions come to mind. What is the overall objective of the project? What must be done to administer a complete system to ensure precise and accurate location information? What options are out there? What is involved in the process? And the bottom line – is it really worth the effort, even in the face of compliance mandates?

These days, any telecom manager that has been through even one major E911 (Enhanced 911) upgrade is considered a veteran. Paula Graller has been through two. As Communications Services Manager for the **Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority**, manager of **McCormick Place Convention Center** and **Navy Pier** both in Chicago from 1986 to 1999, and Voice Team Manager of W. W. Grainger, Inc. for three years, Graller is very knowledgeable about what to look for in a solid system and how to manage the implementation process. In this case study, Paula shares her seasoned perspectives on E911 optimization.

The Objective:

Two of the greatest motivating factors for implementing E911 are state legislation and concern for employee and public safety. Thirteen states require some form of E911 compliance for businesses, however that was not the driving factor for Graller’s implementation at MPEA or at W.W. Grainger. “The safety of our employees is paramount, states Graller, We were looking for a solution long before compliance was a state law. With the support of our management team, we believed moving towards an E911 solution served that goal”.

As described above, Paula Graller was involved with two major E911 implementations, MPEA/Navy Pier and W.W. Grainger, both major facilities in the Chicago area.

→ Grainger was operating six Avaya Definity PBXs with a total of 15,000 stations that could dial 911, including fax lines and modems, and over seven buildings serving more than 12,000 employees.

→ The Metropolitan Pier & Expo Authority (MPEA), includes the McCormick Place facilities with a combined total of more than 2.2 million square feet of exhibit space, 1.6 million square feet all on one level, making it the nation’s largest convention center. This complex serves over 4 million

visitors each year, making it also the nation's busiest. Navy Pier is "like a high rise lying on its side", observes Graller. An almost mile-long peninsula jutting into Lake Michigan from Chicago's showcase shoreline, there's only one way in or out. With this level of potential (legal) exposure it was determined that "in the grand scheme of things, implementing an E911 solution was a no-brainer, and relatively inexpensive method to protect ourselves (against possible liability), and potentially save lives" recalls Graller.

The Solution:

Critical factors in choosing an E911 vendor were integration with existing systems and automation of ALI database updates. Both MPEA and Grainger experience lots of moves, adds and changes, so it was important to have an automated system that could detect moves, adds and changes directly from the switches. According to Graller, "The automation of E911 Manager and our ability to pull all station information directly from our six PBXs, resulted in a tremendous savings of time, personnel resources and organization of the entire process. If we would have gone with a manual solution, it would have taken twice as long to complete and three times as many people."

The key to a successful project is to include those that receive the greatest impact. From the onset, the team included local public safety officials. "We didn't want to second-guess how best to display critical building information to those that must interpret it, without actually asking their advice. Although it was not required for us to involve the PSAPs, we did because safety is important." The PSAPs recommended some very logical changes, which Graller admitted, in the end, it all ticks like clockwork.

Project management is another key factor in installing E911 due to the time-sensitive nature of the data. "Once we decided to go with E911 Manager, we conducted a conference call with all involved from both RedSky and Grainger. It was a great way to launch the implementation and make sure everyone was on the same page. We had two Grainger employees working on this project with a RedSky project manager and account executive."

The Impact, from Graller's Perspective:

Saving money:

"There's no question that we saved money. We would have had to add at least two full time equivalent employees to implement a manual solution here. That means it would be four to five times the labor of the RedSky solution to track, add and change the database on a continuing basis. Plus, over the long haul, automation usually has an even greater return. And when you consider the safety issues, the case gets even stronger."

Easy Administration:

Graller praises the system's performance. "I like the fact that color coding was used in the design, so you can visually see what are errors vs. warnings. I also like that the program is written in 'Plain English,' so you don't have to be a tier 3 engineer to figure it out."

Meeting Objectives:

Reflecting on the experiences at MPEA and Grainger, Graller reveals her most potent global observation. "You enter the situation thinking about compliance and liability, you know, all the 'left brain stuff', but then as you really get into the why's, you come out of the situation with a good feeling that maybe sometime, somewhere, you will have helped save a life or head off a tragedy. That's a pretty good feeling to have!"