

Denville Police Department

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Customer Profile:

**Denville Police Department,
town of 16,000 in northern
New Jersey**

Key Statistic:

**More than 25,000 calls per
year**

Business Need:

**Reliable system that would
allow faster, more accurate
search and replay**

NICE Solution:

- **Wordnet Series 2**
- **Total recording**
- **16 channels with plans for 8 more**

Business Benefits:

- **Time to retrieve and review a call is reduced from two to three hours per call to just a few minutes**
- **High capacity archive reduces media cost and improve reliability**
- **Call recordings frequently used for training purposes**

For the Denville Police Department, it was time for a change.

It was early 2001 and the department, charged with law enforcement and 9-1-1 response for the town of 16,000 people in northern New Jersey, had a minor crisis on its hands. Its aging communications recording system, never particularly reliable, was breaking down, and the department had no backup system for recording the more than 25,000 calls that pour into the communications center every year.

Their requirements were clear. They wanted reliable equipment, and they wanted a system that would let them find and retrieve stored recordings quickly and easily. “We need to pull recordings up several times a month, for evidence in a court case, for an investigation, or to look into a citizen complaint about a call-taker,” said Lt. Randall Weick, the department’s administrative officer. “Ira Stoller at nearby Micro-Strategies, Inc., and Terry St. Pierre of NICE Systems showed me the NICE Wordnet Series 2 system, and I could see that call retrieval would be a much simpler task.”

The system was installed in June, and it wasn’t long before Lt. Weick and his new recorder had an important assignment on their hands.

Early in the morning of June 22, less than 24 hours after the recorder’s installation, a major catastrophe occurred on the stretch of Interstate 80 that runs through Denville. Three trucks, including a tanker with 7,000 gallons of fuel on board, collided on the highway, injuring several people and touching off a fire whose intense heat damaged a concrete bridge that resulted in the bridge’s closure for several months.

The first calls came into the Denville station from nearby residents who’d heard and seen the crash. Soon, every public safety organization in the area – local police and fire units, state police, medical personnel – were on the scene to render aid and redirect the halted traffic.

“Because the accident occurred on the interstate, it fell under state police jurisdiction,” Weick said. “As the closest PSAP, however, our department in effect became the communications hub for the emergency operation. As it happened, emergency calls and radio transmissions were moving unabated in and out of our facility from six in the morning until late that evening.”

By all accounts, the rescue and emergency work, including a quickly conceived temporary bridge that began carrying traffic the following week, was a model of professionalism and teamwork. In the aftermath of the incident, however, many of the public safety organizations involved in the operation initiated reviews and reports on the units' activities. Had their people responded quickly and efficiently? What had they done right? Was there room for improvement in some areas? How could they do even better the next time?

For Weick and the NICE Wordnet recorder, the work was just beginning.

Over the next several weeks, Weick found himself responding to many requests for recordings related to the accident. "The search and retrieval process was a breeze compared to what we'd been used to," Weick said. "With older systems, finding a specific call or series of calls was a needle-in-a-haystack proposition. With the NICE unit, there are several criteria for locating calls – by date and time, by recording channel, by call-taker number, and so on. Calls matching the given criteria can be displayed graphically and in a listing on a PC workstation screen for immediate playback."

In the I-80 incident, for example, the local fire department wanted to review its role in the operation. Weick was able to isolate fire calls from the appropriate recording channel and then easily create a tape cassette of fire calls with the period specified in the request. The system also offers the option of converting audio files to .wav files, which can then be sent to a requesting office as an email attachment. It's also possible to retrieve calls from several different channels and arrange them graphically and on a cassette in the chronological order in which they actually occurred, thus giving officials an accurate sense of the overall communications situation at the accident scene.

"But I think I was most impressed by the fact that the system that had been installed less than a day earlier handled all the recording and search and retrieval work flawlessly," Weick said. "Even with the brief basic training I'd received, I was able to meet all the recording and retrieval demands that came in. It was a great feeling to have such a reliable system."