

CASE STUDY: The Isle of Man Government



**Isle of Man
Government**

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CUSTOMER PROFILE: Government

INDUSTRY: Emergency services

LOCATION: UK

BUSINESS NEED:

Improve government agency communications
Improve incident reconstruction through consolidation
and integration of recording technology

RESULTS:

Improved evidence disclosure from one day to one hour
Complete accountability for dispute resolution of
every incident

On NICE:

“We had a very bad accident on our roads last year. By having full recording of everything that went on in that instant, we were able to provide evidence to the coroner’s court that indicated exactly what actions were taken by the police and the ambulance service during that incident.”

*Technical Director for the Department of Home Affairs’
Communications Division, Robert Williamson*

ABOUT The Isle of Man Government

The Isle of Man is a self-governing dependent territory of the UK. The Isle of Man Department of Home Affairs provides services to improve the quality of life for the Island’s community. Core to that mission are police, fire and ambulance services that ensure the safety, protection and security of the Island’s 76,000 inhabitants.

THE CHALLENGE

In the spring of 2004, the Isle of Man’s Department of Home Affairs embarked on an aggressive multi-phase, five year plan to integrate and improve government communications among various agencies on the island. Spearheading this initiative was Robert Williamson, technical director for the Department of Home Affairs’ Communications Division. Williamson’s division is charged with managing and maintaining the entire government radio communications infrastructure for the Island.

Williamson described the situation prior to the spring of 2004: “At that time our system didn’t enable a joint approach to communications across government. We had an analog radio system that was reaching the end of its operational and maintainable life,” he said. The emergency services for the island – the constabulary, ambulance and fire services – also operated in a decentralized fashion, each having its own communications/dispatch center.

The first phase of the plan called for replacing an outdated analog radio system with a new TETRA (Terrestrial Trunked Radio) system. “One of the big advantages of the TETRA system was its flexibility, in terms of being able to add new users and improve interoperability among our police, fire and emergency services,” said Williamson. If there was an incident requiring a combined response from all three agencies, or other government entities such as customs or excise, the new system would facilitate those joint operations. The system currently supports 2,500 users spread across 21 sites and 16 user organizations, and has logged close to one million radio calls since April 2004.

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THE SOLUTION

Coincident with its TETRA upgrade, the Isle of Man government also consolidated what had been three disparate control operations for emergency communications under a single joint control center. Since opening in the spring of 2004, the new center has handled about a half-million emergency and non-emergency calls.

From the very beginning, Williamson realized that investing in trunked radio and centralizing communications would necessitate re-evaluating their recording technology, too. Up until that time, each agency had employed its own recording system. A virtual hodgepodge of recording technology was used – from legacy reel-to-reel tape recorders to DAT (digital audio tape-based) machines.

Aside from the obvious problems of having to deal with different vendors, different maintenance contracts, and so on – there was one over-riding concern: the ability to reconstruct incidents that necessitated a multi-agency response. ***“You would have to search at least three different recording systems before you could get the information you needed,”*** said Williamson. ***“The investigation into an incident was very longwinded and required lots of coordination to come up with an answer.”***

With the centralization of communications under one joint emergency control room and the deployment of TETRA, the Isle of Man realized it needed an integrated approach to recording too. The Island opted for a turnkey solution from Motorola, integrating Motorola’s Dimetra system and trunked radio recording from NICE. ***“We wanted a centralized solution that had a proven track record of successfully interfacing with a TETRA radio system,”*** said Williamson. The Island’s new system records all TETRA radio transmissions and command and control center calls, storing these recordings on hard disks. It also captures trunked radio data from the Dimetra system to facilitate call retrieval.

The communications division fields about 60 requests to provide recordings and transcripts each month. “We receive requests to search by radio ID, by talkgroups or by time or by event. So it’s a varied list,” says Williamson.

The new system has saved the agency time and money. “If we took a request for recordings for a road traffic accident before,” he notes, “it would probably have taken a good day for the three services to pull that information together.” Today, that same job can probably be done in about an hour.

But according to Williamson, the Island’s recording system is potentially protecting and saving something far more valuable. “If there are disputes or allegations, we’re able to prove or disprove them by going to the recordings,” says Williamson. He cites one specific instance where the recording system proved indispensable.

“We had a very bad accident on our roads last year. By having full recording of everything that went on in that instant, we were able to provide evidence to the coroner’s court that indicated exactly what actions were taken by the police and the ambulance service during that incident.”

And that, said Williamson, is the biggest benefit of all.

About NICE Systems

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