



CAPTURING REAL TIME INTELLIGENCE.
DELIVERING REAL TIME RESULTS.™

Huntsville Utilities is located in Huntsville, Alabama and is owned by the City of Huntsville. Huntsville Utilities is actually three separate Systems operating under three Boards appointed by the City Council. The Gas, Water and Electric Systems share top management, customer services, billing, meter reading, accounting and purchasing to save our customers money.



INDUSTRY

Utilities

SITE OF DEPLOYMENT

Huntsville, Alabama

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Deployed: March 04
Channels recorded full-time: 8
Telephone System: Nortel
Meridian M7324

PURCHASE DECISION FACTORS

- DVD-RAM archival storage media
- Reliably record 100% of all incoming and outgoing calls
- Easy to use search functions
- Fast retrieval speed

BENEFITS

- Dependability
- Low maintenance costs
- Reduces liability exposure
- Improved training and quality assurance efforts

VPI's Quality Monitoring Solution Successfully Transforms Huntsville Utilities' Training and Quality Assurance Management

Huntsville Utilities is composed of three separate systems operating under boards appointed by the Huntsville City Council. Providing service to over a quarter of a million people, the Gas, Water and Electric Systems all share management, administrative services and a central dispatch center to keep the cost of service to consumers low. When the dispatch center's antiquated reel-to-reel recording system became too difficult and expensive to maintain, Huntsville made the switch to VPI's advanced digital technology.

In the Huntsville Utilities' dispatch center, the work consoles are manned continuously to answer every customer call for service and to answer billing questions. "I have the VPI system recording every telephone, because we answer electric, water and gas calls, 24 hours a day," reports John Hawkins, the Dispatch Supervisor.

With the VPI system it's easy to use search functions and its lightning fast retrieval speed, resolving a dispute about billing or what was said during a request for service is just a few mouse clicks away. Hawkins recalls a typical call for service when a residence lost power. "We asked, 'Sir, have you checked your circuit breakers?' and they responded, 'Yes we have.' And we always tell them, 'We wanted to alert you that this call could be subject to a \$65 service charge if that breaker is tripped when our service technician arrives.'" Naturally when that \$65 charge shows up a few weeks later, some customers who may not have checked the circuit breakers tend to forget that they were warned over the phone. That's when the ability to instantly find and playback the original phone conversation is such a time saver.

It's not just retail utility customers who might be calling the dispatch center. "Our E911 center, the Huntsville Police, our county - all the emergency responders can call in on these phones. They have to be recorded." Because not every service call is routine. A report of a gas leak or a power outage at a hospital is serious business with potentially life threatening consequences. It is critical to be able to recreate all the calls associated with a serious incident of that type, both to reduce liability exposure, and to assist in training and quality assurance efforts.

Thanks to the inherent power of voice recording, sometimes simple techniques can have a big impact on quality improvement. Hawkins recalls an incident when "I retrieved ten calls an employee had made. I asked him to go into a room and listen to himself and come back and tell me what he would suggest.

"You know, we were paying \$4,000 a year for the maintenance contract on that old system? I said, let's just take that \$4,000 and apply it to purchasing something we can depend on!"

John Hawkins
Dispatch Center Supervisor

He came back and said, 'I didn't know I sounded like that.' And I said, 'Well, what do you need to do?' Of course I knew what he needed to do, but I wanted to hear what he thought first - a very beneficial tool."

In addition to phone lines, radio traffic is also routed in and out of the dispatch center and is recorded by the VPI system. "We record our radio communications - channels 1, 2 and 3 for water, electric and gas," explains Hawkins. "The radio traffic is mostly our line crews communicating. And our field service communications are also on the channel 3 radio. Of course if there was ever a 'may day' alert on any of those channels, we would be able to pick it right up."

Since 100% of the radio transmissions are recorded 24/7, "if we have a major emergency, we can load up all the radio and phone transmissions related to it and recreate the whole incident. It's just a wonderful thing, a really remarkable piece of equipment."

What were the decisive factors that led to the purchase of VPI's system? According to Hawkins, one of them was the DVD-RAM archival storage media, a standard feature in the VPI solution. "You know, I had over 200 reel-to-reel tapes on the old system, and one tape would only store about 48 hours of calls. We were always changing tapes. With VPI, the storage is so good, we still haven't had to change our first DVD-RAM disk yet! ... It's a beautiful system."

Other decisive factors were the dependability and low maintenance costs VPI is famous for. "You know, we were paying \$4,000 a year for the maintenance contract on that old system? I said, let's just take that \$4,000 and apply it to purchasing something we can depend on!"

VPI is a leading innovator

– delivering real time results. Through its Activ! Performance Suite, VPI enables contact centers, trading floors, government agencies, and first responders, to capture, evaluate, and analyze traditional voice, VoIP, video and Web interactions to improve business and operational performance, mitigate risk, and ensure regulatory compliance. VPI solutions are designed with reliability, adaptability, and expandability in mind to accommodate changing technologies, customer needs, and legislation. For more information, visit <http://www.VPI-corp.com>