



CAPTURING REAL TIME INTELLIGENCE.
DELIVERING REAL TIME RESULTS.™

The Ventura County Fire Department provides a full range of fire protection services within the unincorporated areas of Ventura County.

The range of services includes fire prevention and suppression, medical aid, rescue, hazardous material mitigation, a variety of non-emergent public services and all supporting services.



WEBSITE

fire.countyofventura.org

SITES OF DEPLOYMENT

Camarillo, CA

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Deployed: April 2001
Channels recorded full-time: 68
Telephone System: Plant
Equipment Vesta
Radio System: Motorola

PURCHASE DECISION FACTORS

- Reliably record 100% of calls & radio communications
- Ease & speed of searching and retrieving records for sharing & playback
- Unlimited online storage capacity
- Technology integration

BENEFITS

- Significantly improved record turnaround time
- Increase supervisor & staff productivity
- Reduced maintenance & support costs

Beyond Voice Logging – VPI Improves Efficiency & Enhances Dispatcher Training & Quality Assurance

The Challenge

Every hour of every day, a myriad of situations prompt the citizens of Ventura County to pick up the phone and dial 9-1-1 – secure in the knowledge that help is on the way. From raging infernos to road traffic accidents, emergency rescues, and hazardous spills, the Ventura County Fire Department (VCFP) provides key support and public safety dispatch throughout Ventura County and extended areas, including Malibu, Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley, Camarillo, and Ojai — plus the contract communications services for Santa Paula, Ventura City, and AMR Ambulances.

With a fast-growing population of over 700,000 and the potentially critical nature of every call, a 100%-reliable voice recording solution was vital for ensuring the well being of the community and its citizens. In addition, the tedious records retrieval procedures inherent to proprietary technology utilizing reel-to-reel recording media were simply no longer acceptable. Plus, training and quality control issues would have to be addressed — both are of utmost importance in the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) industry.

New System Requirements

During a critical time of mass consolidation between counties requesting EMS dispatch, VCFP needed to make sure that they had the leading technology available for digital voice recording. Their existing system was of a proprietary nature and didn't offer the functionality they needed. That's why in April 2001, they decided to explore their options and find a better solution to their current and future needs. Complete recording reliability was a major factor, as was the ability to save calls as .WAV files for fast delivery to third parties. It was essential that the vendor employ competent, certified technicians and that the system be extremely user-friendly.

The Solution

After some research and investigation, VCFP decided to give VPI International an opportunity to demonstrate their voice recording technology. "We were following the trends of the industry and noticed that everyone was moving toward software-driven, digital recording and storage for quick retrieval," says Steve Stephens, VCFP Administrating Dispatcher. "Other systems were not able to support the growing trends in the public safety dispatch centers. When we met with VPI, we explained our particular needs and goals. Once we viewed a 'working demo' of the system, we immediately knew that VPI was heads above the competition."

A VPI recorder was promptly installed, and for the last two years the system has operated on a 24/7/365 basis — resulting in over 18,000 hours of recording time. With 68 full-time recording channels, the system records 1,500 channel hours per month. Stephens notes that a major consideration point for VCFP at the time of the purchase was the fact that the VPI relies heavily on "off-the-shelf" technology with parts readily available in the unlikely event that the need arise. The "hot swappable" power supplies, hard drives, and other major hardware components also played a part in the decision to install the system. All VPI International recording systems are designed around the principles of true open architecture, built on the network-friendly Windows NT/2000 platform

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and the industry's most powerful SQL database. The systems are constructed with commercially-off-the-shelf standard PC hardware with fault tolerant, redundant components and are scalable to thousands of channels, with virtually unlimited hours of storage and instant recall. "We have been very pleased with the performance of the system to date... the system is 'low maintenance' from a hardware and engineering perspective," said Stephens.

Significant Benefits

In the EMS industry, communication centers often receive calls from their local district attorney's office requesting records pertaining to a particular event. The communication center administrator needs to be able to retrieve the record(s) fast. With the reel-to-reel systems this proved to be a time consuming, draining process, requiring time and resources that VCFP could not spare. Steve Stephens can attest to the frustration of dealing with this obsolete technology. "Can you imagine going through thousands and thousands of records on a reel-to-reel tape looking for a single, particular call that the District Attorney needs in one hour?" Now, with the VPI System, this particular ordeal is a thing of the past. "We had a very high profile criminal case that occurred in Ventura County and our local district attorney required us to send the full recreation of the event to him immediately. With VPI's intuitive search capability, I was able to locate the calls, highlight them, and with a push of a button, combine them into one .WAV file and send them as an email attachment over to the district attorney in a matter of minutes."

The system added a special function to the training for VCFP employees. Stephens found that replay of recently captured audio records to dispatch trainees added real-life dimension to the training process. Trainees were quizzed on how they would respond and/or react to the particular situation being replayed. "We were able to put them in real-life situations in order to better gauge their reaction timing and etiquette. From there, we knew which areas to target for further training." Stephens added that the software interface is outstanding from a user's perspective, "I have been able to train my most 'non-technical' staff to use the interface effectively in daily operations with minimal time devoted. Employees with even cursory knowledge of a Windows environment have been able to efficiently utilize the device."

Ventura County Fire Protection's extensive quality control assurance program (Continuous Quality Improvement program, or CQI) is outsourced to another segment of the County. As the CQI is in a different building, the VPI system has been instrumental in the efficiency of the CQI process. "With the ability to save calls as .WAV files, what we have done is simply set up a password protected folder on our network where we save the calls," said Stephens. "That way, the CQI officer that is reviewing the calls can just go into the folder and replay the call records for evaluation. It's as simple as that." Additionally, the CQI officer can request agent specific calls for a particular time period. The administrator simply queries the call database with the Agent ID and the requested time range. Once those calls are located, the administrator simply saves the calls as .WAV files in the designated shared network folder for the third party retrieval and review. "VPI has played a huge role in our success of maintaining a consistent score in the 100% range of the EMT for levels of customer service," added Stephens.

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Conclusion

The Ventura County Fire Protection system is the first "vital link" between the citizens of Ventura County and emergency fire and medical services. It operates on a 24-hour shift schedule 365 days a year. Its demands require a leading-edge recording solution.

"My research into voice recording devices at the time of the original purchase taught me that there is no such thing as the 'perfect' recorder, however, the VPI device that we purchased comes as close as I believe is currently possible for our applications and use," said Stephens. "Since the installation in early 2001, we have pretty much doubled the amount of work that is being done with it and it is meeting our expectations hands down. Everybody is just really impressed with the system." According to Stephens, VPI's customer service and degree of professionalism have been exemplary, "During all of this process, VPI has been patient and helpful and has exhibited a spirit of cooperation almost unheard of in today's working environment... I have the utmost confidence in the abilities of the recording device to run properly and in the Company's ability to support their product."

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>