



MAX Dispatch Opens the Door to Broadband PTT

When Boxborough, Massachusetts, Police Chief Warren Ryder decided the time had come to update his department's communication technology, his first order of business was to obtain a new dispatch system. His wish list for the new system included things that are vital to public-safety operations: interoperability across different radio equipment, ongoing system health monitoring, ease of use and maintenance, and redundancy that ensures 24/7 operation.

The Zetron MAX Dispatch system Boxborough subsequently installed with the help of Zetron reseller All-Comm Technologies is making virtually all of Ryder's wishes for an effective, future-proof dispatch system come true.

Small is beautiful

Located 28 miles west of Boston, Boxborough has a population of about 5,000 and covers an area of just over 10 square miles. Despite being a stone's throw from Boston, Boxborough has retained much of its rural, down-home character. "It's a lovely, historical community, green and mostly agricultural" says Ryder. "There aren't many places like it in the state."

Updating Boxborough's Communication Center

The Boxborough PD Communication Center is the town's primary public safety answering point (PSAP) and dispatch center. As such, they answer the town's 9-1-1 calls and dispatch for the town's police, fire, public works, and regional animal control.

Ryder explains why he was looking to replace the center's existing dispatch system. "At 15-years old, it was based on old technology and wasn't providing the reliable operation we need."

The new equipment would have to be redundant, reliable, and able to support interoperability across multiple agencies. "If we have to block a road, get help from the fire department, or control a crowd, we need to be able to call in other departments and communities," says Ryder. "The new system would have to be able to help us do that."

Other things on Ryder's wish list included the ability to control the center's doors, alarms and alerts as well as the ability to monitor and adjust the server room temperature, all from the console. They needed the system to be able to support their impending move to a digital Tait Project 25 (P25) network infrastructure. The system would also need to connect to their existing analog infrastructure temporarily, then seamlessly migrate to the Tait system once it was up and running.

MAX Dispatch and All-Comm fill the bill

Ryder researched the latest-and-greatest dispatch systems on the market. Zetron's MAX Dispatch appeared to be the best system to fulfill his requirements at an affordable price. With this in mind, he called ALL-COMM Technologies, a local Zetron vendor he'd never worked with before but had heard good things about. ALL-COMM Technologies president, Paul

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Warren Ryder, Chief of Police & Director of Communications, Boxborough Police Department

Boudreau, answered the call and immediately agreed to come to the center the very next day to give a presentation of MAX Dispatch.

Boudreau arrived the next afternoon armed with a laptop, some brochures, and a MAX Dispatch demo. The presentation he proceeded to give was a resounding success, and the decision was made. With ALL-COMM's help, Boxborough would obtain and install Zetron's MAX Dispatch.

Interviews and observations

The first step of the project involved interviewing and observing the center's dispatchers. “I wanted to talk to and observe them to understand what they do and what they need,” says Delvis Javier, the All-Comm Technologies technical supervisor who oversaw the project. He would use this information to design a setup that would streamline and automate many of the agency's procedures.

System staging and review

All-Comm staged the system at their shop. “We set up the consoles, built the rack, and configured the screens based on the dispatchers' input,” says Javier. “We also tied in all of the radios so we could demo its interoperability.”

Another key feature they demonstrated during the staging and review was the system's impressive network redundancy.

“MAX Dispatch includes a main network and a standby, redundant network,” Javier explains. “During the customer review, we disconnected the main network to let them see for themselves how standby automatically takes over and keeps things going as if nothing had happened. They really liked that feature.”

‘We’ve already got it all figured out’

Once the system was finalized and approved, it was taken to the communication center and installed in parallel with the center's existing system. The installation was completed without a hitch. Dispatcher training was next, but it turned out to be unnecessary. “We'd scheduled training to acquaint the dispatchers with the system,” says Ryder. “But they said, ‘There's no need; we've already got it all figured out.’”

3 connections to Tait system

Not long after the dispatch system installation was complete and operational, the new Tait infrastructure was set up. Javier says they made three redundant connections from the Zetron console to the Tait system. “One is a P25 DFSI [Digital Fixed Station Interface] connection. The second is a Tait analog line, and the third is an RF control that uses a Kenwood control station over the air. This gives them alternate ways to connect to the network if any of them should fail. One is in primary use; the others are just a click away.”

One button, multiple pages

Boxborough's MAX Dispatch system also includes numerous features that have simplified their operations. For instance, dispatchers are now able to open doors from the console. They also receive visual/voice alerts whenever someone opens a front or back door. and many dispatching procedures are now more streamlined. “Previously, they had to send out separate pages for fire and police,” says Javier. “To cut time, we put a single button on the screen so dispatchers could send simultaneous pages to both fire and police. This has shaved precious minutes off their response—a big deal to a communication center.”

‘These systems really come alive’

Ryder has generous praise for Boxborough's MAX Dispatch system and those who installed it. “I love it. I wouldn't change a thing. It has all the interoperability, redundancy, system monitoring, and integrated console capabilities I was hoping for. Plus, after the initial install, we added a remote laptop position that we can operate from anywhere. As far as maintenance goes, if anything comes up, I call Delvis, and he immediately dials in and walks me through how to fix it, fixes it himself, or sends someone out. All-Comm and Delvis are terrific. When you're working with people like that, these systems really come alive.”

Ready for broadband PTT

What's next for Boxborough? Much, according to Ryder. “We're looking at how we might communicate over smartphones, even if we're out of radio range,” he says.

The good news is that MAX Dispatch now supports broadband PTT through the P25 Console Subsystem Interface (CSSI).