

TANDBERG CUSTOMER PROFILE

Anne Arundel County Emergency Management



When a crisis situation strikes the Washington DC metro area, the entire region is affected. Anne Arundel County Maryland, located halfway between Washington DC and Baltimore, is no exception. As home to over half a million residents, the state capitol Annapolis and several federal agencies, Anne Arundel faces unique challenges during crisis situations. How do you communicate effectively with local, state and national entities quickly and efficiently to keep citizens and the community safe? For the Anne Arundel County Office of Emergency Management, the answer was found in a unified communications network that brings voice, data and video together to instantly reach anyone at anytime, anywhere.

CHALLENGE

When James Weed became director of the Anne Arundel County Emergency Management Department, he knew that enabling inter-agency, regional and state communications was his first responsibility. Local first responders such as Police, Fire and EMS must be able to communicate both with one another and, in times of crisis, with the Maryland Emergency Management Agency and FEMA. What the county needed was a single communication network that could transmit vital information – including live video – quickly and efficiently during a crisis. “If history has taught us anything, it’s that the content and quality of communications during a crisis are critical to ensure the safety of both civilians and first responders. Audio and data were already being used in the field, but we had seen the power of video and knew it would be the “critical missing element” to our unified solution.” said Director Weed.

In order to make this vision a reality, Anne Arundel took a hard look at its existing network and communications investments. Fortunately, the existing infrastructure was adequate for the County’s needs. Working with ARINC, a leading developer of communications networks, Anne Arundel leveraged federal grant funds to develop their integrated voice, data and video (real-time and on demand) network that will allow all first responders in the county act as a single department in both emergency and non-emergency situations.



TANDBERG TACTICAL MXP

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SOLUTION

In order to fully reap the benefits of videoconferencing as part of this unified solution, each department operations center (DOC), Police, Fire, the Health Department and eventually, the local public school system, were all equipped with TANDBERG video systems To enable them to communicate face-to-face on a daily basis and in crisis situations.

The county also invested in a centralized Emergency Operations Center (EOC), which serves as the primary command center for their unified communication network. With TANDBERG video codecs, 25 foot Christie plasma screens and a host of other communications technologies, this critical communication center enables collaboration between disparate agencies during crises.

In addition, the County's Mobile Crisis Communications Unit (MCCU), was also equipped with a TANDBERG Tactical, a rugged, mobile video system designed for use in field operations. So regardless of the location of the crisis, the MCCU could send live visual images of the situation back to the DOC for real-time incident assessments.

RESULT - HEALTHY TEAMS, STRONGER RESPONSE

Last year, Anne Arundel County deployed its emergency response team and MCCU to Louisiana to help the disaster relief efforts after hurricane Katrina. Over the span of 3 weeks, the MCCU team delivered food, water and safety gear to those in the storm's path. This grueling, sometimes emotionally draining effort was dramatically improved by the videoconferencing capabilities of the MCCU.

When the relief situation became especially disheartening, the Anne Arundel response team were able to talk to their families back at the EOC using the MCCU video system. Videoconferencing provided the team with much needed face-to-face time with their families, improving their attitudes and ability to serve those in need. "This situation demanded that our guys perform at their very best, and the ability for the team to use the TANDBERG solution to communicate with their families was critical to the success of the operation." said Director Weed

By providing a visual 'window' into the activities all of the agencies within its county borders and connecting beyond, Anne Arundel has become a model of how to improve emergency operations with a holistic approach to information exchange and management. By investing in TANDBERG standards-based solutions, they have created a fully interoperable future-proof unified communications network, one that will last beyond the next change in technology. Thanks to this approach and the vision of its leaders, today Anne Arundel County, Maryland, is prepared for even the worst disasters.



TANDBERG WORLD HEADQUARTERS
Philip Pedersens vei 20
1366 Lysaker, Norway
Tel: +47 67 125 125
Fax: +47 67 125 234
Video: +47 67 126 126
E-mail: tandberg@tandberg.net

200 Park Avenue, Suite 2005
New York, NY U.S.A. 10166
Tel: +1 212 692 6500
Tel: +1 800 538 2884 (toll free in the U.S.)
Fax: +1 212 692 6501
Video: +1 212 692 6535
E-mail: tandberg@tandbergusa.com

www.tandberg.net

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