



Customer Profile

Public Safety

Website

www.harriscountyso.org

Location

Houston, Texas, USA

Needs

Streamline audio reproduction requests, reduce backlog. Implement state-of-the art Quality Assurance program.

NICE Solutions

- NICE Recording of Motorola MCC7500 Gold Elite radio and Vesta for 911 communications
- NICE Inform Reconstruction
- NICE Inform Organizer
- NICE Inform Evaluator

The Impact

- Reduced audio reproduction turnaround time by over 50%
- With paperless delivery of audio reproductions, cut overhead costs from \$2,700 a month to virtually nothing
- Completely transformed QA program to maintain high standards of service for citizens of Harris County

“Our turnaround time went from 3 to 6 weeks to 10 to 15 days. Our backlog is now within 30 days of the original request which is phenomenal. Our overhead cost has gone down tremendously as well. We were spending over \$2,700 a month in supplies and that has been reduced to almost nothing. We’re very happy so far!”

Kathi Yost, C.M.C.P.
Director of Communications
Harris County Sheriff's Office

Largest U.S. Sheriff's Office Cuts Audio Reproduction Turnaround Time by over 50%, Bolsters QA to Improve Service

About Harris County Sheriff's Office

The Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) is the largest sheriff's office in Texas and the third largest in the United States, with over 4,600 employees and 200 reservists dedicated to ensuring the safety of over 4.1 million residents who call Harris County home. The HCSO's Emergency Dispatch Center (EDC) is responsible for answering 9-1-1 Emergency and Non-Emergency calls. It dispatches sheriffs to calls for law enforcement service, and also routes fire and EMS calls to over 100 agencies in unincorporated Harris County. In 2015, the EDC received and processed 1.1 million 9-1-1 calls, 460,000 non-emergency calls, and 1,500 text-to-911 emergencies.

The Challenge

The EDC receives 12,000 records requests annually, from courts, district attorneys, defense attorneys, detectives, media and private citizens. The responsibility for churning out all these records falls on six audio records custodians. The HCSO's old methods of reproducing audio recordings onto CDs and accompanying documentation on paper, was very time consuming and costly, and caused frequent backlogs. Turnaround times of three to six weeks were not uncommon. In addition to improving its turnaround time on audio reproduction requests, the center also wanted to implement a state-of-the art Quality Assurance program to ensure the best possible service to Harris County citizens.





The Solution

Using the NICE Inform suite of applications, the EDC has been able to address both of these challenges. "Once we got NICE Inform, we were able to virtually eliminate CDs and transition to paperless delivery for records requests," said Kathi Yost, HCSO Director of Communications. "Our turnaround time went from 3 to 6 weeks to 10 to 15 days. Our backlog is now within 30 days of the original request which is phenomenal. Our overhead cost has gone down tremendously as well. We were spending over \$2,700 a month in supplies and that has been reduced to almost nothing. We're very happy so far!"

Yost credits the remarkable results to the 'teamwork' of NICE Inform and the HCSO's secure file share system. It all starts with a work order to find the pertinent calls related to a case. Once the 9-1-1 and radio calls are retrieved, they're saved in a NICE Inform Organizer case folder, and then distributed to the custodian's desktop where they're compressed and emailed to the requester in .wav file format through the secure file share system. Additional information – that used to be reproduced on paper – is shared electronically as well. This includes Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) records, CAD system call slips, and Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) records.

"NICE Inform is very easy to use; our custodians are able to fly right through audio reproduction requests," said Yost. "We're now able to share audio reproduction requests electronically versus burning CDs and using a hand-delivery method. We've transitioned into the 21st century."

NICE Inform also eliminates duplicate work. The HCSO audio records custodians log every request in a Microsoft access database. The logged work orders link back to the case folder incident names in NICE Inform. When multiple parties request the same audio reproduction, custodians can simply retrieve the original reproduction, without having to do the same work all over again. "It's not uncommon to receive multiple requests for audio reproductions for certain incidents, like officer involved shootings," said HCSO Records Custodian Sheryl Hughes. "If we've already pulled records and saved them in Inform, it's easy to retrieve and share them again."

Another NICE Inform feature that HCSO Records Custodians Sheryl Hughes and Kristin Chambers really appreciate is the redaction feature which allows them to easily 'bleep out' a sensitive or confidential section of audio. Before Inform, redaction was manual and time-consuming. "You'd have to write down the start and end times and go in and manually remove the audio; if you messed up, you'd have to start the whole process all over," Hughes explained. "With NICE Inform you can just bleep over it, by picking the range you want to redact and hitting a button – it's that easy!"

"We want to pave the way and lead in the country in training, as well as in quality and performance."

Kathi Yost, C.M.C.P., Director of Communications, Harris County Sheriff's Office.

"Thanks to NICE Inform Evaluator, the EDC now also has a more systematic and objective process for QA'ing calls. NICE Inform Evaluator combines automated, rules-based call selection with a form builder for creating QA evaluation forms.

"Prior to NICE Inform Evaluator, our QA program was based on our audio records staff reviewing the requests received, rather than a random sample of the over 200,000 calls we receive monthly," said Yost. "And we didn't QA our radio traffic. Our new system is going to enable us to do a much higher performance level evaluation of all our interactions with first responders and the public. With NICE Inform Evaluator, we're also able to set our own parameters and guidelines for what we'll be looking for, based on our call taking and dispatch policies and procedures," Yost added. The EDC has set up customized electronic QA forms which its 15 supervisors will use to evaluate emergency and non-emergency calls, and dispatch communications.

Inform Evaluator will also improve feedback to telecommunicators, because they'll now be able to listen to their own calls. "Before, the only way they'd be able to listen was if a supervisor requested a copy," said Chambers. "We'd send it to the supervisor and the supervisor would call the telecommunicator into the office to discuss it." With NICE Inform Evaluator, employees will be able to review their evaluation and listen to the call right from their desktop. "I think it will increase their knowledge because they'll be able to hear their own performance," said Yost. "They'll be able to say 'you know what, that really didn't sound professional, and I need to come up to the standard that my agency expects.'"

By leveraging the many robust features of NICE Inform Evaluator, Yost expects to bring QA full circle in the EDC. "We want to pave the way and lead the country in training, as well as in quality and performance," she said.

About NICE Public Safety

NICE public safety solutions integrate and put into context information from many sources to help emergency communications centers and investigation departments reconstruct and understand the who, what, when, where and why of an incident. NICE Inform, the industry-leading digital evidence management (DEM) solution, gives emergency communications centers better insight into how to continuously improve their operations. Over 3,000 organizations rely on NICE public safety solutions daily.

About NICE

NICE (NASDAQ: NICE) is the worldwide leading provider of enterprise software solutions that empower organizations to make smarter decisions based on advanced analytics of structured and unstructured data. NICE solutions help the world's largest organizations deliver better customer service, ensure compliance, combat fraud and safeguard citizens. Over 25,000 organizations in more than 150 countries, including over 80 of the Fortune 100 companies, are using NICE solutions. www.nice.com

