



MAX Dispatch Chosen by Those Who Save Lives

Rural/Metro Medical Services recently chose MAX Dispatch to replace their poorly supported and aging dispatch system. The new system provides the IP-based functionality Rural/Metro requires to expand and improve its services. It is also supported by local provider, Saia Communications.

When someone calls for an ambulance, there's little time for mistakes or miscommunications. Whether the triggering incident is a heart attack, a car accident, or a baby who's decided to enter the world ahead of schedule, the situation must be responded to without delay. That's why the dispatch system used to send an ambulance to the scene of such an event is considered a "mission-critical" piece of equipment. Someone's life might depend on it, and often does.

It's a testament to Zetron's reputation for reliable, effective equipment that Rural/Metro Medical Services (Rural/Metro), an ambulance company in western New York State, recently installed Zetron's MAX Dispatch system in their communication center. Zetron reseller, Saia Communications, was chosen to implement and support the new system.

Rural/Metro Medical Services

Rural/Metro Medical Services provides ambulance services for 22 hospitals, over 100 nursing homes and health care facilities, and more than one million residents of western New York. Headquartered in Buffalo, they also have offices and ambulance bases in Cheektowaga, Hamburg, Niagara Falls, and West Seneca.

Rural/Metro also provides "pre-arrival" instructions to those calling for an ambulance to help them deal with the emergency until an ambulance arrives. This can include everything from instructing the caller on how to perform CPR to helping them deliver a baby.

A study in contrasts

Until recently, Steven Pollard was the communications manager at Rural/Metro. Although he now serves in a different capacity at the company, he is very knowledgeable about why Rural/Metro needed a new dispatch system. "We were having an increasing number of issues with our existing

dispatch console and the support its manufacturer was providing,” he says. “The vendor was out of state, and they provided their support over the phone or dial-in. If we had a hardware issue, we’d have to pack up the equipment and send it to them to be serviced. This was a nightmare.”

The situation only worsened as the system got older and service calls became more frequent.

This experience contrasted sharply with the solid performance of the Zetron system they’d had some years previously and the effective support for all of their other radio equipment they were getting from their local radio maintenance provider, Saia Communications. Saia had also supported their previous Zetron system.

“The Zetron system we had in the past was extremely reliable,” says Pollard. “If we ever had an issue—which was rarely—we’d call Saia, and one of their technicians would be here within 20 minutes, day or night.”

A good investment

Given all this, it’s not surprising that when the time came to obtain a new dispatch system, Rural/Metro decided that Zetron’s IP-based MAX Dispatch system, installed and supported by Saia Communications, was their preferred choice.

Pollard says that, among other things, MAX Dispatch offered the cutting-edge functionality Rural/Metro needs. “We’re always looking for new approaches that will improve our services and put us ahead of the competition,” he says. “In this case, we also wanted a system that would be a good investment for the future, not one based on technology that’s already outdated. The MAX system offered the up-to-date technology we need to expand features, add positions, and dispatch remotely.”

The MAX Dispatch system ultimately chosen for Rural/Metro included seven positions: four for dispatchers, two for call takers who provide backup dispatching when needed, and one for the shift supervisor.

Customer input

The system arrived at Saia Communications, and they went about staging it with plenty of input from the customer. “Their dispatchers and supervisors came to our shop to give us feedback on things like volumes, colors and screens, and which channels they wanted where,” says Saia Communications project manager, Chris Krzemien. “So by the time we cutover, many of the dispatchers were already quite familiar with it.”

One night’s work

Just prior to the final cutover, Saia Communications set up several positions in their office and brought Rural/Metro’s dispatchers there to perform their tasks while the system was being put into place and finalized at the customer’s site.

“We got the new equipment installed, tested and brought online in one night while the dispatchers were operating from our office,” says Saia senior technician, Mark Evans. “When the next shift showed up at Rural/Metro’s office the next day, the new equipment was ready to go. It was seamless as far as they were concerned. And it only took one night’s work.”

Consolidating information

As part of the implementation, Saia Communications integrated MAX Dispatch into Rural/Metro’s wide-area trunking network and brought into the console MDC-1200 IDs that had previously required a separate piece of equipment.

“Our dispatchers used to have to look in one place for the radio channel and another place to see the IDs. This is now combined onto the MAX console. Having this information consolidated in one place reduces clutter and is much better for our dispatchers.”

Sharpening the competitive edge

Bill Szewc, who stepped into Pollard’s former position just as the new system was being adopted, is full of praise for MAX Dispatch.

“The MAX system is very powerful, customizable and able to adapt to our needs,” he says. “It’s sophisticated, but very easy to use. Our dispatchers were as surprised to discover this as I was. Most, if not all, of the training was done ‘on the fly,’ which proves just how easy it is to use.”

“We provide services at many large events throughout the region,” Szewc continues. “We’re now looking at how the MAX system’s IP capabilities will allow us to offer higher levels of service at these events. This helps sharpen our competitive edge. More importantly, it improves our ability to provide help where it’s needed.” ■



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