

The Right Response: Birmingham Regional Emergency Medical Services System Can Count on SouthernLINC Wireless' Private and Dependable Network

Overview

Reliable communications is critical to successful emergency response. Perhaps no one understands this better than the Birmingham Regional Emergency Medical Services System (BREMSS), a group of emergency response agencies that banded together more than 30 years ago to improve communication between multiple agencies during emergency response efforts.

Serving more than 1.5 million people across seven counties, the organization works with all components of the Emergency Medical Services System, including more than 185 Emergency Medical Services (EMS) provider agencies, 17 hospitals, more than 2,500 Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), 10 trauma centers, 12 stroke center hospitals, approximately 80 different municipalities and 19 different 911 agencies.

Challenge

In its early days, BREMSS maintained its own radio towers and operated a proprietary radio system. In 1991, BREMSS opted to use cell phones for communications; however, they proved problematic because coverage was unreliable in rural areas and during severe weather – which cut vital communications links and sometimes jeopardized emergency response efforts.

Solution

The integrated wireless communications service from SouthernLINC Wireless is an ideal fit for BREMSS. Unlike broadcasting over commercial two-way radios, SouthernLINC Wireless' Push to Talk service enables private, instant communications by using iDEN (Integrated Digital Enhanced Network) technology from Motorola.

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BIRMINGHAM REGIONAL EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES SYSTEM (BREMSS)

Category: Healthcare

Building a Successful Wireless Partnership – SouthernLINC Wireless and Birmingham Regional Emergency Medical Services System

CHALLENGE

The EMS Communications System required a network with rural coverage that could withstand severe weather and allow all BREMSS organizations to communicate instantly with hospitals as well as other EMS organizations. Additionally, the wireless network needed to be private to ensure confidentiality of patient data.

SOLUTION

The integrated wireless communications service from SouthernLINC Wireless was an ideal fit for BREMSS' communications requirements. Unlike broadcasting over commercial two-way radios, SouthernLINC Wireless' Push to Talk service enables private, instant communications by using iDEN (Integrated Digital Enhanced Network) technology from Motorola.

RESULT

SouthernLINC Wireless' cellular and Push to Talk service enables emergency medical technicians to communicate with each other — quickly, reliably and privately.

BENEFITS

The SouthernLINC Wireless network is digital and private. There is no known scanner that can intercept communications over the SouthernLINC Wireless' network. This is critical for emergency response providers transmitting confidential medical information.



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Additionally, stronger coverage is not an issue with SouthernLINC Wireless because its network was specifically built to support Southern Company's subsidiaries, which include Alabama Power, Georgia Power, Gulf Power and Mississippi Power. Power company employees must be able to communicate from rural areas and in some of the toughest conditions so SouthernLINC Wireless built in redundancies and extra security features to help make sure communication was possible when needed most.

"In a disaster situation, communications is usually the first thing to fail," said Michael Minor, assistant director and data coordinator for BREMSS. "We knew that the utility companies heavily rely on their own communications system in an emergency. Since SouthernLINC Wireless is a part of Southern Company, we recognized that they could provide us with the reliable service we needed."

Today, many U.S. hospitals still use outdated systems that can be overloaded and scanned by the public to communicate with other emergency response groups. The SouthernLINC Wireless network is digital and private. There is no known scanner that can intercept communications over the SouthernLINC Wireless network. This is a critical factor for emergency responders who must transmit confidential medical information.

Minor noted three areas that are essential to BREMSS' communications:

- **Instant communication:** "The organization can use SouthernLINC Wireless' network to send short message alerts to all of the EMS providers in the region when a hospital becomes overloaded. This provides ambulances with up-to-the-minute information about where to route patients."
- **Reliability:** "BREMSS uses SouthernLINC Wireless handsets to dispatch the LifeSaver medical helicopter. LifeSaver can travel anywhere in SouthernLINC Wireless' footprint and still connect with other EMS organizations using Push to Talk."
- **Connectivity:** "BREMSS operates one of the only real-time trauma systems in the world. All of its trauma centers are linked via computers and SouthernLINC Wireless' network, allowing hospital staff to communicate internally and with other EMS providers regarding patient care and logistics."