

SouthernLINC Wireless and Motorola Bridge Communications Gap in Dothan, Ala.

Overview

Public sector officials in Dothan, Ala., faced a serious breakdown in communications. Before enlisting SouthernLINC Wireless and Motorola, city employees relied on an aging, unreliable private radio system that had spotty coverage, audio interference and crowded channels.

The lack of a consistent communications platform was detrimental – especially to the city’s first responders. During an emergency, it was critical that they could connect with one another and their counterparts at the state level.

In February 2007, Dothan’s public service departments – specifically, police, fire and utilities – selected SouthernLINC Wireless as their official communications provider. However, the city of Dothan couldn’t completely cease using its private radio system, since other government agencies in Alabama continued to use it. Dothan officials tapped SouthernLINC Wireless and Motorola to bridge the communications gap between the existing radio network and wireless services from SouthernLINC Wireless.

Challenge

For years, Dothan officials had struggled with the limited usefulness of the city’s aging, private radio system. In fact, City of Dothan radio users were surveyed about the system’s efficiency. The survey revealed that 85 percent experienced some degree of radio interference; 81 percent could not access a radio channel on the first try; and more than 70 percent said that they regularly depended upon a mix of personal and city-supplied cell phones, even in emergency situations.

In early 2007, more than 150 police officers began using the durable Motorola i325 handsets, while the city’s fire safety officials started using model i325IS, which met intrinsic safety standards. These first responders quickly noticed that the SouthernLINC Wireless phones even functioned in the remote, rural areas that typically received spotty coverage on the radio system.

As a result, Dothan city employees who received SouthernLINC Wireless phones equipped with Push To Talk two-way radio (PTT) service had a reliable way to communicate with one another at the push of a button. Yet, the private radio system could not be entirely eliminated, because other Alabama government agencies were still using it.

Chief of Police John Powell and Fire Captain Jimmy Ward met with city council members, city commissioners, the mayor and the city manager to illustrate the problems they were having with the old system and the need for a solution that would incorporate the newly acquired SouthernLINC Wireless phones.

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CITY OF DOTHAN, ALA.

Category: Government

SouthernLINC Wireless and Motorola Team Up to Ensure Seamless Communications in Dothan, Alabama

CHALLENGE

City government officials in Dothan, Ala., needed an answer to their communications challenges. For years, the city of Dothan had relied on an aging, private radio system. Users regularly complained that the radios had spotty coverage, audio interference and crowded channels.

SOLUTION

In 2007, the city of Dothan selected SouthernLINC Wireless as its official cellular and Push To Talk two-way radio (PTT) provider. While this alleviated many of the communications headaches, the problem wasn’t completely solved until Motorola entered the picture. Motorola implemented its interoperable ASTRO® 25 network along with its MOTOBRIDGE™ platform. This made instant communications between SouthernLINC Wireless phones and Motorola ASTRO 25 radios possible.

RESULTS

The city of Dothan has benefited immensely from a combination of interoperable cellular phones and more reliable radios. Now, city personnel have the ability to connect instantly at the push of a button, whether they’re using a city radio or a SouthernLINC Wireless phone.

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Solution

Soon after, city officials tapped Motorola to address the challenges associated with the private radio system. The interoperable Motorola ASTRO 25 network was deployed, linking it to the old system with MOTOBRIDGE to maintain uninterrupted communications during installation. MOTOBRIDGE uses existing networks to carry radio traffic (regardless of frequency band) and adds new agencies and dispatch locations, with virtually no limit to the number of users or the network's geographic reach.

Police and other first responders using SouthernLINC Wireless now are able to communicate directly with users of ASTRO 25 portable radios. Together, the Motorola ASTRO 25 network and the Motorola iDEN (Integrated Digital Enhanced Network) system – which is the technology platform used by SouthernLINC Wireless – have created a regional, interoperable and scalable communications network that enables interagency collaboration and should continue to meet the city of Dothan's needs far into the future.

SouthernLINC Wireless has extensive experience serving public sector and government agencies. The company is the official wireless provider for the state of Alabama and has relationships with many local, state and federal agencies that are charged with disaster preparedness and response. As a result, SouthernLINC Wireless enables Dothan city officials to remain in close contact with key groups and decision makers during emergencies.

“The public service agencies in Dothan work hand in hand, so it's important that everyone can connect quickly with one another – especially in the event of an emergency,” said Powell. “SouthernLINC Wireless provides the police and fire teams with a redundant system – which doesn't tie up the Motorola radio system.”

Benefits

Dothan personnel reported numerous benefits from the ability to connect those with SouthernLINC Wireless phones to those using the Motorola ASTRO 25 radios, including:

- **Interoperability:** Motorola and SouthernLINC Wireless worked together to help ensure that the ASTRO 25 radios operated seamlessly with the SouthernLINC Wireless phones, enabling communications across multiple agencies. “One of the greatest benefits of working with SouthernLINC Wireless is interoperability – the ability to reliably communicate with other local and state agencies,” stated Powell.
- **Network reliability:** Since its inception, the SouthernLINC Wireless network has a proven track record of providing reliable communications during and after several major hurricanes, including Erin, Opal, Ivan and Katrina. Powell said that the wireless phones proved reliable in past emergency scenarios, including when a tornado hit Enterprise, Ala., in 2007.
- **Critical coverage:** Since SouthernLINC Wireless functions across the state throughout metro and rural areas, Dothan city officials knew that the carrier's service would be reliable even in remote locales where they had experienced spotty coverage from the city's private radio system.



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BENEFITS

Interoperability is vital; city officials in Dothan no longer worry about being able to communicate with key first responders and statewide law enforcement agencies in an emergency.