Virtual Operations Center

To facilitate rapid response in the event of an emergency, the city of **Anaheim, California** (328,000), has consolidated all of the digital information from its police, fire, building, and utilities departments to create a single portal to all of this information. Now, when an emergency occurs, staff from all relevant departments can readily obtain the information they need, regardless of the computer system in which it is stored.

Leadership/staffing

The Enterprise Virtual Operations Center (EVOC) was developed by two programmers who work for the contractor that provides the city's data processing services.

Timeline

The programmers spent approximately six months developing EVOC. The system was launched in the summer of 2004.

Budget/funding

A U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Urban Area Security Initiative grant provided slightly less than $1 million to develop the system, which Anaheim has made available to local communities.

Program description

Previously, the information stored by each department was available only to staff from that department, making it difficult to manage emergencies. Because EVOC provides access to information from a wide range of digital systems across the city, it now serves as a virtual command and operations center that is available to authorized users over the Internet. As a result, city administrators and public safety personnel now have access to the system wherever they are—whether in the office, out in the field, or out of the country.

To protect the data, the system has several security levels, and different staff members and authorized employees can access voice, video, and data transmissions with automated workflows to guide them through standardized response strategies. All employees have access to information on pending calls but not to such details as the name of a suspect or patient. The data are also available to DHS so that it can act quickly in the event of an emergency in Anaheim.

Using EVOC, the police can communicate directly with every other officer in the field, see events as they unfold, access up-to-date information from state and federal sources, and find out what fire and paramedic personnel are doing. Similarly, while on their way to a fire, firefighters using their laptops can access EVOC over the city's wireless network (which covers 70 percent of the city) to obtain information on traffic and weather conditions as well as blueprints of buildings and details of hazardous substances.

Results

EVOC was very useful during the recent California Angels playoff games. The command post used EVOC to track fire, police, and other vehicles as well as to monitor images from security and traffic cameras. The city expects to see more and more collaboration between departments as staff become more familiar with the activities of their peers.

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