



BlackBerry Solution Helps Alaskan Police Department on the Job



Located at the heart of Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, the Soldotna Police Department is a busy force of 13 officers who deliver law enforcement services and crime prevention programs. The Alaskan landscape poses unique challenges to these officers who often work away from their vehicles and away from in-car radios and other tools that are needed to perform law enforcement activities.

Success On BlackBerry

Industry: Public Safety/Law Enforcement

Region: North America

Company Size: Small organization - 15 employees

Email Platform: Microsoft® Exchange

Type of Solution: Field Service, CRM and Dispatch Operations

BlackBerry Alliance Member Solution:
InterActPocketCop™ by InterAct Public Safety Systems

THE CHALLENGE

The officers of the Soldotna Police Department work in the rugged, open spaces of the Alaskan frontier. Duties can take them away from the radios in their vehicles, which was the primary method the officers communicated with the dispatch center. In order to run suspicious vehicle license plates, check the records of individuals and communicate with the other members of the department they used portable (handheld) radios for most communications.

The Soldotna Police Department wanted enhanced communication capabilities, and a solution that would be more cost-effective than installing computer terminals in vehicles. With grant funding from the Alaska Highway Safety Office, the Soldotna Police Department began investigating capabilities provided by the BlackBerry® solution.

"One of our key goals was to help ease workload from the dispatch center," says Kalie Klaysmat, Special Assistant and Grant Writer. "If the officers needed information, they would have to contact a dispatcher. If it was for a report, the dispatcher would have to pull up the information, print it, fax it to the station, and the officer would have to go into the station to retrieve it. We wanted a way to put the ability to look up information directly in the officers' hands."

THE SOLUTION

The Soldotna Police Department gave their police officers BlackBerry smartphones, multi-functional communication devices that offered a range of new capabilities. The smartphones are being used by the police to send email, SMS text and make phone calls. They also let officers take and transmit photographs, create video and audio records at crime scenes and have Internet access almost anywhere - all from their BlackBerry smartphones.

The Soldotna Police Department also deployed InterActPocketCop by InterAct Public Safety Systems. The InterActPocketCop application is designed to provide wireless access to federal, state and motor vehicle databases. An officer has the ability to check the status of individuals, vehicles, boats, articles and guns from their BlackBerry smartphone without having to contact a radio dispatcher.



"The BlackBerry smartphone has really opened up a different medium of communications between officers, various agencies and management staff."

Mark Berestoff, Police Officer, Soldotna Police Department

Key Benefits

More cost-effective than laptop-based solutions

Reduces the need for carrying extra devices

Puts information in the hands of officers

Encourages more communication between officers

Frees up dispatchers

According to Klaysmat, deploying the BlackBerry solution was more cost-effective than installing laptops in patrol vehicles. "We were able to put this technology in the hands of our officers at a great savings," she says.

THE BENEFITS

For Officer Mark Berestoff, his BlackBerry smartphone has changed the way he works on the job. As a police officer for nine years and someone who likes using technology, he is impressed by the way his all-in-one smartphone helps him get the job done.

"Not only does my BlackBerry smartphone bring the convenience of having a good phone that I can be contacted on, it offers me a multitude of tools without having to carry a lot of extra equipment," says Officer Berestoff. "We use the audio recorder on the BlackBerry smartphone to document what happens during investigations, which means we don't have to carry a separate recorder anymore. It also takes excellent photos and videos of accidents and crime scenes that can be used as evidence later. For example, I can record a field sobriety test as it happens."

He also uses access to the Internet to look up information. If he's at a scene where someone has taken prescription drugs that might endanger their life, he can look up the drug. Before, he'd have to radio in to have someone find that information. He also uses SMS to text other officers during undercover investigations and to complete routine tasks, which keeps him almost constantly in touch.

The InterActPocketCop application helps Officer Berestoff look up vehicle licence plates and run the names of suspects on-the-spot. "Instead of having to wait by the radio for this information, I can access InterActPocketCop on my BlackBerry smartphone to get the information myself. I can run a person's name while they are standing in front of me to see if they have any prior convictions. I can also have our dispatch center email a picture of the suspect, so I can confirm their identity."

InterActPocketCop is also used when officers are creating reports. They can finish reports wherever they are working by looking up information themselves without having to contact a dispatcher. Because officers are using their own BlackBerry smartphone, dispatchers are then freed up to focus on emergency communications instead of routine queries.

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