

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

METRO SECURITY

Bexar County Texas uses best of breed security systems to launch EOC

By: Ralph C. Jensen

It has been a long time coming, but the Bexar County Metro 911 Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is up and running, and the security systems implemented to protect the facility are among the best of the best. The regional operations center unifies emergency operations into one cutting-edge facility.



A New Home

Built in San Antonio, Texas, the EOC provides a new home for the Bexar County Sheriff's communications operations and is an alternate site for the San Antonio police and San Antonio fire and EMS operations. The facility is a joint operations center not only for Bexar County but also for Comal (New Braunfels) and Guadalupe (Sequin) counties. All three counties touch dividing lines and are considered part of the San Antonio metro area. Bexar Metro 911 executive director Bill Buchholtz said building the facility has stayed on budget of \$40 million, "give or take a couple of million."

The electrical system meets Tier IV data center standards for maintaining operations regardless of any unplanned activity, and the mechanical system meets Tier III standards. Because the building is under a tight security system inside and out, it was also important that redundant systems were in place, as well as uninterrupted power. Employees based at the

monitors on the main floor are given breaks every so often to decompress, relax and interact.

Alterman Technologies was hired to provide, install and direct the security solutions effort for general contractor Whiting-Turner, who directed construction on the 81,500 square foot facility located on 11 acres of land.



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Early Stages of Planning

Alterman Technologies' staff was fortunate to work with the general contractor in the early stages of planning security for this facility. According to James Carmen, Alterman's project engineer, being able to make early and consistent contact allowed for the integrator to help specify the types of security that they felt would most satisfy the end user. It also allowed the installation crew to be able to meet their integration deadline of 8 months, long before the overall construction of the facility was complete.

"We were able to evaluate all components of the security solution when we saw the demonstrations of the Lenel, Axis and Salient products," Carmen said. "We're pleased with the decisions we made to deploy this security equipment."

To keep the facility secure, Alterman Technologies installed 170 IP cameras inside and out to enforce perimeter security. Now that the facility has been formally dedicated and is fully in use, if a person doesn't have a reason to be on property, they aren't getting inside. The facility is secure.

Alterman Technologies installed 120 door enterprise access control systems, including iClass biometric readers. To monitor both the outside perimeter and inside the building itself, 110 5 MP Axis Communications IP cameras were paired with Salient Enterprise video management systems integrated with the Lenel access control solution. Inside the operations center, the facility is outfitted with 100 55-inch video control systems side by side, all of which are integrated with video and audio control solutions.

Inside the facility, there is a first-floor, open room for 104 operator desk consoles, where operators can keep tabs on all three counties. Operators sit in a 13,878-squarefoot Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) to handle all 911 calls, formerly managed at 25 different locations. In fact, during the recent Hurricane Harvey, operators inside are able to coordinate any and all emergency and rescue operations.

"The ability to have multiple supervisor control stations is a key feature, providing access to sources and allowing supervisors to manipulate the wall and change presets as needed," said Art Salinas, project manager for Alterman Technologies. "It's a great system with no real limitations. I believe the client has been pleased with the capability to control and preview content before it goes on the wall. They currently have about 30 preset displays."

Getting Behind the Power

With the number of cameras and the video streaming to the facility, Salinas had to be certain the equipment he was recommending and the software that would power the system would work without a hitch, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"Our work to determine the right kind of solution was very involved, and we evaluated all the systems," Salinas said. "When it came right down to it, we selected Lenel's OnGuard for access control, Axis Communications IP cameras and Salient's VMS and its PowerUltra servers. All of this is securely stored in an enclosed network so there is no worry of outside hacking."

Salient regional sales representative Paul Fisher said the choice of VMS was truly an important decision because it had to be strong enough to stop any breaches but also be able to provide the ability to run the perimeter security system and the internal security.

“Our VMS solution is able to take the lead with all the streaming video and push it wherever it is directed,” Fisher said. “With three counties and multiple agencies using this facility, the security solutions have to be dependable, yet easy to use.

“We were invited in to demonstrate the system, and we were able to show numerous details that would benefit the end user. We are able to provide reliability and scalability, and we’re a local company, so that worked to our benefit as well,” Fisher said.

The facility is designed to provide uninterrupted 911 services during various emergencies, including terrorist attacks and natural disasters. There also is an onsite helipad for access by law enforcement officials, should area roadways be closed or congested, and for staging for media during a public emergency. The building is constructed to withstand an EF3 tornado strike and to operate without any public utilities for an extended period of time.

“The mission of the facility is to provide that emergency response when a caller is quite possibly going through the worst experience of their life,” said James Hasslocher, Bexar Metro 911 network district chairman.

