

NorthmarkCommunications

Field Deployable Telecom Solutions

Application Notes: Temporary Barebones 911 PSAP

Situation: Your public safety answering point (PSAP) has been taken out of service due to storm damage or equipment failure. Your primary goal is to start answering calls and dispatching again as quickly as possible.

Solution: Create a “portable PSAP” including all the supplies and equipment required, packed in easily carried storage containers, ready to go. This may be stored on site, or at another secure location. A Northmark Communications DTS1000P or DTS1800N portable backup PSAP PBX telephone system is a key part of this plan.

Set up an alternate location at a fire station or other facility in advance. Install an adequate number of dedicated POTS telephone lines to conveniently located and well labeled jacks. The lines may be active, or left in “stand-by” status for quick activation with a call to the telephone company’s emergency operations center (EOC) under a Telecommunications Priority Service contract. Alternatively, you can use a multi-line cellular telephone base station to allow operation from any location.

When the temporary PSAP is to be opened, contact the telephone company’s EOC and transfer all 9-1-1 calls to the designated phone numbers (landline or cellular.) Place the PSAP PBX case in a safe central location, connect the line jacks to incoming telephone lines, run extension cables out to each agent position, set up dispatch radios, and begin operating. Optional T10 headset phones may be a better choice for high-volume call taking than the standard ITT2203 speakerphone.

Planning Considerations: ANI/ALI data cannot be easily re-routed, so this plan calls for basic call answering capability only. Any dedicated alternate-location 9-1-1 and administrative telephone numbers should be distributed to those who need to know them well in advance. This is true whether you are using landlines or cellular telephone base stations. If possible, the telephone company’s EOC should also know the numbers in order to facilitate a quick transfer when the time comes.

If using landlines, be sure the phone company sets up the POTS lines in a “hunt group.” If any line is busy, the call will “roll over” to the next available line.

Since you will not have access to ANI/ALI data or off-site databases, pre-load and regularly update several laptop computers with essential community information, such as telephone directories, maps, agency staff lists, handicapped citizen databases, and other useful information. Current paper phone books and printed emergency information are also important in the event that a computer fails.

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Application Notes: Temporary Barebones 911 PSAP (Continued)

The DTS1000 series can accept from three to sixteen outside telephone lines, depending on model. Several can be set aside as administrative lines if desired.

Dispatching: For the sake of overall efficiency, the 9-1-1 call takers can handle radio dispatch directly, or pass written incident information to dispatchers sitting nearby. If either of these methods does not fit your mode of operation, there are three alternate methods or system configurations that can be used.

1) Off-Premise Transfer: To transfer 9-1-1 callers to another outside telephone number (such as a distant sheriff's department) for dispatch, you will need to be sure that the 3-way calling feature is enabled by the phone company on all incoming lines. With most telephone companies, transfers are accomplished by pressing Flash, dialing the remote number, and then pressing Flash again to bring the calling party into the conversation. The entire sequence can be programmed into a speed-dial button on our ITT2203 speakerphones. In most areas, the agent will need to stay on the line until the dispatcher is done and all parties hang up. Check with your local telephone company for specific details.

2) Separate Local Dispatchers: If you plan to have separate call takers who transfer the call to an appropriate dispatcher sitting nearby, we can program their extensions to take only transferred calls, and not outside calls. In practice, it would work something like this:

A caller dials 9-1-1 to report a fire. The call taker determines the nature of the emergency, and then transfers the call to the extension assigned to the fire dept. It can be either a blind or supervised transfer.

3) Integrated EOC/PSAP with Local Separate Dispatch: If your EOC, PSAP and dispatch are at the same location, a better solution is to use a DTS1800N large portable PBX system instead of the DTS-1000P series. This allows calls to ring until a call taker is available, and then transferred to a dispatcher's extension or to someone in the EOC if necessary. With 16 incoming lines (more are possible) and up to 48 extensions, it is possible to program for use as a combined PSAP and EOC, with groups of incoming lines programmed to ring at different extension groups.

Custom configurations are available to meet your needs. Contact Northmark Communications today to discuss your particular needs and application to determine the best solution.