Spillman in Action: Tuscaloosa Police Department, Alabama

overview

The Tuscaloosa Police Department needed a fully-integrated software package to enable all divisions to become interoperable, or have the ability to exchange data on demand. The previous software used was unreliable and lacked the functionality needed to collaborate and share information. Spillman helped connect each division using the latest wireless and database technologies.

challenge

The Tuscaloosa Police Department was seeking an interoperable solution to collect and exchange information within the agency’s various divisions and task forces. They needed a way to unify the entire agency so each division, from patrol to investigation, could access critical reports, statistics, and information to better serve the community.

“We were unable to retrieve information as quickly as we needed,” said Chief Ken W. Swindle. “We needed a way to track activities in the community and pass that information to officers in the field, as well as neighborhood watch groups and city officials.”

The department also needed a system that was more reliable, with frequent software updates to keep them on the cutting-edge. “We had a system for records management and computer-aided dispatch, but every time we updated the software, we experienced some problem that didn’t allow us to continue operation without making fixes,” said Doug Taylor, director of information technology.

solution and benefits

Software Integrates Department

The department selected Spillman Technologies’ public safety solutions to enable each of their divisions to connect and collaborate with users, down the hall and down the street.

Using the latest in wireless and database technology, Spillman helps Tuscaloosa become a fully connected workplace. The software’s modular architecture allows the department to add to its system as needed, while maintaining seamless integration.

A single-source database is the sole location to input, store, and retrieve data, so each division can update and access information as needed. Wireless mobile solutions enable remote collaboration for field officers in real time.

In addition to its own investigation unit, the agency is also the host site to a metro narcotics task force and homicide division. “Spillman helps us collaborate and share information with different divisions and task forces throughout the city and region from homicide to narcotics,” said Taylor. “We couldn’t imagine not having the benefits of the fully-integrated Spillman system.”

Unwired Patrol

For officers on patrol, the ability to access name, vehicle, or property information, or even the ability to view mug shots, is essential. Spillman mobile solutions expand Tuscaloosa patrol officers’ productivity with the ability to run queries, update call status, and view alerts or warnings that are logged into the system.

“Information is collected and viewable to each mobile unit,” said Swindle.

agency profile

Tuscaloosa Police
The department’s six divisions support community-oriented policing and crime prevention programs. The department is facilitated by an air patrol unit—four helicopters capable of patrolling the area.

• 264 Sworn officers
• 75 Civilian employees
• 80,000 Population

Chief Ken W. Swindle

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“Officers can disseminate to other officers what activities took place in the prior shift or in a particular neighborhood.”

“One of the best things about having Spillman in the car is that all of the information you need is on the screen in front of you,” said Lt. Joe Reed, patrol division supervisor. “We have seen a decrease in the amount of radio traffic by cutting down the number of repeated calls for the same information. It saves dispatchers time by not having to repeat themselves.”

Expanding Communications

A person calls in a bomb threat from a cell phone. Using the latest Phase II 9-1-1 technology, a dispatcher is able to accurately plot the location of the caller and silently dispatch officers. Within minutes, the suspect is arrested. In Tuscaloosa, it’s happening today thanks in part to Spillman’s 9-1-1 technology, Geobase and mapping tools, and mobile solutions.

“Recently, a caller called in a bomb threat to one of our schools,” said Capt. Jeff Hartley, communications division supervisor. “We were able to plot his location and make an arrest from the information we received through the 9-1-1 system and Spillman software. In approximately 30 minutes, we had the suspect in custody.”

Using Spillman’s dispatch solutions, the communications center efficiently manages about 9,000 service calls each month. The software allows call takers to quickly populate contact information, saving valuable seconds per call. Once a call is built, dispatchers work with response personnel providing them with on-scene intelligence from sophisticated mapping programs, and providing alerts or warnings about individuals involved in an incident.

The Communications Division works closely with other divisions to improve response times and officer safety. “Spillman’s mobile solutions allow dispatchers to interact with units in the field,” said Hartley. “Field officers can view call information in real time as it is being entered by the dispatcher.”

Case Closed

Tuscaloosa investigators receive an average of 50 new cases each month in addition to the cases they are already working. Spillman helps supervisors manage the division’s workload by tracking the status of cases, clearance rates, and the number of cases given to each investigator.

Additionally, any information gathered by dispatch, patrol, evidence, and records is accessible to investigators working the case. To date, the department has collected information on more than 268,800 names that can be searched and linked to numerous records, creating single-query access to all related information.

“All of the information, from field interviews to old cases that have been worked before, is collected in the Spillman system, providing investigators a world of information,” said Lt. Randy Vaughn, criminal investigation division supervisor. “It gives us more avenues, more leads, and more directions to take a certain case. The more cases we can put into Spillman, the more cases we solve.”

Comprehensive, Accurate Reports

At a time of heightened national security, public safety agencies must accurately demonstrate their ability to respond quickly and effectively. Using Spillman, Tuscaloosa police generate reports that document efficiency and assist them in making tactical decisions.

“I get monthly reports to disseminate to city council members to show what crimes their districts are experiencing, and what we are doing,” said Swindle. “Based on the accurate information we get from the software, we are able to communicate and work together with the mayor to determine how we can utilize our resources and budget.”

“We use Spillman to view call volumes and call types for each beat,” said Reed. “This is how we figure out where we need to deploy more officers and how many officers should be assigned to each shift.”

According to Vaughn, the department uses the software to track case statistics such as the number of cases received, cleared, and the arrest rate. “Those statistics are how we get grants and show where our department is compared to other departments in the state and around the country.”

about spillman

Spillman Technologies meets the individual needs of public safety professionals with a full suite of software solutions. The software is installed at more than 700 agencies nationwide.

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