

Oregon Police Department Uses CradlePoint for Increased Reliability and Improved Management of In-Vehicle Networks

SUMMARY

The city of Medford, Oregon's police department had recently switched cellular carriers when it began having problems managing the wireless network and the carrier's network devices. As a result, police officers experienced frequent loss of wireless signal in their patrol cars. As often as twice a day, the city's public safety systems administrator Pat Roam would get calls from officers unable to connect to the network. Without the connection, the officers couldn't receive orders from dispatch, write citations, or conduct many daily police operations.

CUSTOMER PROFILE

The Medford Police Department provides public safety services to this town of 75,000 in southern Oregon. The department has more than 150 personnel, including 100-plus police officers and 30 patrol cars. It has an annual budget of approximately \$20 million.

BUSINESS NEEDS

Like most modern police departments, Medford depends on wireless connectivity to help its officers carry out law enforcement activities. Officers use mobile data computers to run driver background checks, verify vehicle registrations and licenses, issue citations, and receive their dispatch orders from police headquarters. With wireless playing such a central role in daily police operations, the department needed a stable, reliable, and rugged way for mobile officers to stay connected to the network—and to centrally manage the devices on the network. Public safety systems administrator Pat Roam said the department also wanted to future proof its wireless network to accommodate a possible switch from laptops to tablet PCs and implementation of vehicle tracking.



DEPLOYMENT: CradlePoint COR IBR600 with Enterprise Cloud Manager

APPLICATION: In-Vehicle Networking through wireless 3G/4G broadband

MARKET: Law Enforcement

SOLUTION

The department began installing the CradlePoint COR IBR600 in its cruiser fleet about a year ago. One of the first improvements was in network uptime. Roam says that in the past, if a cruiser lost connectivity the IT department would have to walk through a series of diagnostic steps with the office over the phone in order to locate the problem.

“ Now, if an officer calls in, the first thing we do if we suspect it's a carrier-based problem is to log into Enterprise Cloud Manager and look at the indicators for that specific vehicle. If we see a green indicator light, then we know it has nothing to do with either the CradlePoint or connectivity to the carrier.”

Roam says that Enterprise Cloud Manager significantly shortens the time officers must spend troubleshooting the system. To further maximize officers' time in the field, in the nearly one year since the department installed the CradlePoint devices service calls from officers related to connectivity have gone “almost to zero.”

Officers also like how easy it is to use the wireless network. Roam says that as soon as the officer turns the cruiser on, the wireless network powers up without the officer having to take any additional steps.

BENEFITS

IMPROVED UPTIME

Roam says that the department's previous solution was plagued with problems: among other things, the carrier had what Roam called a “bad habit” of pushing updates to the wireless devices in a way that would break connectivity. And the carrier's battery powered devices often wouldn't charge once they were two or three months old. The department hasn't experienced any significant interruptions in service since it installed the CradlePoint devices.

TABLET-CAPABLE

The police department is currently testing the use of tablet PCs in its patrol cars. The main advantage, Roam says, is that some officers want to be able to get out of the cruiser to write tickets or conduct other computer-based activities. Rather than being hard wired into the wireless devices as the laptops are, the tablets would use wireless. Since CradlePoint devices are already capable of projecting a WiFi hot spot hundreds of feet from the device, the patrol cars are already equipped to provide wireless access to the tablets.



GPS-CAPABLE

The department is in the process of implementing GPS-based AVL (automated vehicle location) in its cruiser fleet. Rather than having to face the added time and expense of install additional GPS-capable devices in each cruiser, the department simply ordered GPS-capable CradlePoint devices.

CENTRALIZED NETWORK MANAGEMENT

Medford uses CradlePoint's Enterprise Cloud Manager to troubleshoot problems with installed devices, keep track of the phone numbers and accounts for each patrol car's device, and remotely update firmware—all from one central location at police headquarters.

ENTERPRISE CLASS SOLUTION

Medford's previous wireless networking devices were battery powered, made of plastic, and came with only the most basic network management tools. CradlePoint's solution is wired directly into each cruiser's power system, made of metal, and is backed up by the power of Enterprise Cloud Manager.

“ Our last solution was more for consumers. CradlePoint gives us an enterprise-grade, public safety-grade solution that we think delivers the best functionality to our police officers and the best return on investment for taxpayers.”