



# Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service

## Outsourced communications

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### The customer

Covering an area of 653 square kilometers and a population of over 1.4 million, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) is one of the largest fire services in the UK. Since its creation in 1986, MFRS has grown to over 1,800 employees who are located at a number of administrative centres and 26 community fire stations around the district. Due to the logistics and size of the Fire Service, an effective and efficient communications system is crucial.

Reliable and robust IT and communications are vital to any organisation, but to the Fire Service they are critical – literally a matter of life and death. This, together with the introduction of budget regulations from the Government, meant choosing the correct communications and IT systems was essential to MFRS.

Working in partnership with **telent**, and by sharing resources and personnel, MFRS has created a modern information and Communications Technologies (ICT) system, which has not only improved efficiency, but has resulted in a savings.

**telent** has helped save money for Liverpool Council and Liverpool Tax Payers – the council reported that in setting its budget for 2006/7 the Authority was aiming to act in line with its medium term financial plan to keep its budget increase below 4%, because **telent**, the council's ICT services outsourced partner has identified additional savings, the Authority has been able to move below its planning targets and therefore the Fire Authority part of the council tax has increased by just 3.6% as a result.

### Complete IT infrastructure and communications solution

MFRS's incumbent system was fast becoming out-of-date and a restricted IT budget meant new technologies could not be introduced as easily or as quickly as they would have liked. As such, MFRS needed an IT infrastructure and communications system that not only ensured emergency calls were dealt with in the quickest and most appropriate way, but also one which met the budget limitations set by the Government.

The key to effective use of ICT is to have a clear service strategy and business model, with an Information Strategy (IS) that supports them and makes good use of technologies to make them efficient. The scope of the impending project was huge – a completely new IT strategy and communications system was required, from first line call technology and a new control room, to development of business critical applications, PC and email systems.

### Results

A reliable, high capacity and resilient network was required – a fibre broadband private network was implemented in dual mode – a separate network for the corporate administration and mobilising/emergency operation. The Wide Area Network (WAN) at its core will operate at 100Mb WAN and Local Area Network (LAN) at 1Gb, utilising Cisco 4500 CDS and Cisco 3750 AS nodes. Cisco 7240 VXR Routers at the core connect with Cisco 2691 and 1760 routers and 3550 switches at the sites via the dual fibre ring.

This platform enables MFRS to deliver its ICT strategy – operating on a Windows platform with Active Directory and Exchange 2003 servicing 1500 network users across its 30 interconnected sites. All data is stored centrally on a fibre-channel Storage Area Network (SAN) with full replication at the disaster recovery site. The infrastructure includes a resilient Mobilisation, Command and Control model with duplicate functionality at a secondary site.

**telent** are a Cisco approved Premier Partner - accredited to CCNA/CCNP level with Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) status and qualifications in Information Technology Information Library (ITIL) and PRINCE2 - our staff continue to meet the high standards required by our customers.

"This has been, and will continue to be, a challenging and rewarding partnership," says Barry Zielinski, Head of Operations for Emergency Services at **telent**. "Working closely alongside the team at MFRS, we have been able to install systems, tailored to meet the exact needs of the service. In turn, this is enabling MFRS to do its job more efficiently, helping to keep the residents of Merseyside even safer."

"One of the main challenges we face on the project is providing this high level of service whilst keeping within the budget and identifying ways in which we can reduce costs in the future.

As a company, we have a track record in designing solutions that enable customers to add value to their core business and in assisting public sector organisations to meet the strict service targets and objectives now being imposed through Government reviews. This experience is helping us to provide both a cost effective, efficient and reliable communications and IT system."

**telent** has integrated seamlessly into the team and has demonstrated it has both the technical skill to design and install a critically important communications system and the ability to manage it over a prolonged period of time. **telent** continues to improve on the level and quality of service it is providing and offers the flexibility to change and develop in line with the strategic requirements, both in terms of new technology and keeping within budgets which are continually changing. Over the last two years, **telent** has already identified significant savings and has plans in place to increase these. These savings are not be at the detriment of the safety of people. The partnership has proved to be a significant step for MFRS, and **telent** has enabled MFRS to meet the needs of both the public and the Government.

**telent** operate stringent Service Level Agreements (SLA) and provides monthly performance statistics detailing the performance criteria for the period. If **telent** fails to meet SLA targets action plans are undertaken to remedy these and service credits can be applied.

Incident statistics (calls to the **telent** 24-hour help desk) for 2007 were:

- 13,197 incidents raised
- 13,178 incidents closed
- 118 incidents remained open at year-end

### The future's bright

2008 will see **telent** completing the installation and roll out of a brand new voice over IP system (VoIP), replacing analogue, stand alone telephone switches with networked, multi-functional IP telephony switches facilitating digital telephony across the 30 MFRS sites using the existing data network. Over 800 analogue phones will also be replaced with IP handsets – and all this will have been completed within eight months.

The solution is based on the Mitel 3300 Integrated Communications Platform range of processors utilising 3 MXE and 8 CXE nodes designed for five 9's (99.999%) reliability - utilising dual processors, redundant discs and power supplies – ensuring no single point of failure in the network, all users are resilient if a single processor fails they will transparently 're home' to another processor.

Introducing a single telephony number with 3000 Direct Dialing In (DDI) numbers has simplified the public access to MFR services and an Intelligent 'call routing' System provides cost effective choices for calls carried across the public network.

In addition new applications are being introduced to improve mobility and business processes, these include:

- A Contact Centre facility for community
- home fire risk management
- Secure Home and Tele Working for staff
- Mobility Unified Messaging
- Call Recording
- Collaboration, Video and Audio
- Conferencing from the desktop
- Cost Centre Management

**telent** staff are Mitel approved installers and maintainers – staff having undertaken extensive training in all ICP modules including handsets, wireless and soft phones, Nu-Point messaging and call director, speech server, contact center and ACD. Management and Networking accreditation for Mitel systems include Enterprise and Operations Manager and Microsoft Windows and Exchange.

Barry Zielinski concludes

**“ We are extremely proud of the role we are playing in this partnership and will continue to provide the highest level of expertise and service. We have developed a very strong knowledge of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and are committed to providing them with the most effective solutions available. ”**

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