

Nottinghamshire Police has developed a highly flexible and resilient communications, command and control system around its dual control rooms in Nottingham and Mansfield using combined systems from APD Communications and Fortek Computers. The two companies have worked alongside one another with the force since 2003, proving the potential for their two systems to combine effectively in emergency command and control environments.

Since 2008, Nottinghamshire Police has been using the latest VISION PX command and control system from Fortek Computers to manage operations across every workstation in its two control rooms. VISION PX enables forces to map, manage and optimise business processes across their control rooms and public service desks. Fortek Computers has developed data interfaces for the force to support the exchange of data to existing services such as the crime database and the Highways Agency. It has also expanded the VISION PX system to be used outside of the control room, offering a thin client user interface to enable the support of operations from senior management. VISION PX is virtualised across both control rooms to provide a single interface for sharing of contact information, intelligence, and incident and resource management.

In January 2011, the force began the latest upgrade of its APD solutions, starting with the control room hardware and software. Nottinghamshire Police operates two large control rooms in Nottingham (74 seats) and Mansfield (47 seats). All server and client hardware were overhauled along with new touchscreens. Physical peripherals have been replaced with APD's new software alternatives, improving resilience, cutting down clutter and also saving on power costs.

APD also updated the CORTEX Software Integrated Communications Control System (SICCS) software to the latest version, which offers server virtualisation, enhanced performance and security, merging radio dispatch, call handling, video monitoring and web services, allowing control room operators to conduct their duties effortlessly.

The system enables staff to handle large volumes of calls as well as the monitoring and control of communications across a range of computer systems, TETRA digital networks and analogue systems.

With all of these upgrades, the introduction of a series of new working practices and the upgrade to VISION PX, the force has recognised a reduction in incident numbers over the last 2 years.

"Given the importance of the control room function we have to ensure that systems remain current and robust," said Dean Langton, technical project manager at Nottinghamshire Police. "We treat the programme of upgrades as a rolling programme that sees almost every component in the control room refreshed every two to three years. The important thing is minimising the impact on users and in this case that has been almost nil. The upgrades have been completed through live operations in both control rooms without disruption, and maintaining the same UI for the software has minimised any training requirements – a big issue when you take into account our 300 control centre staff and 24x7 operations. The upgrade process has been seamless."

The most significant change in the systems recently has been the upgrade to APD's new software TETRA port pooling solution. This allows any operator, at any terminal, in any control room to access any talkgroup, via any TETRA port. This allows for a huge amount of operational flexibility while ensuring maximum availability.

Operators can be redeployed around the control room or even to other sites; a whole control room could be shut down with functions maintained through the other. The solution is totally software based with no proprietary hardware or single points of failure. With VISION PX virtualised across both control rooms, this flexibility is further enhanced.

Using the TETRA port pooling solution from APD, it's even possible to remotely connect to TETRA ports over a broadband or 3G connection, which is useful when policing sporting events from the numerous sports venues in the county. TETRA selection can be automatic based on the role and talkgroup requirements of the operator or manual through the touchscreen via a very intuitive interface so there's minimal learning for operators.

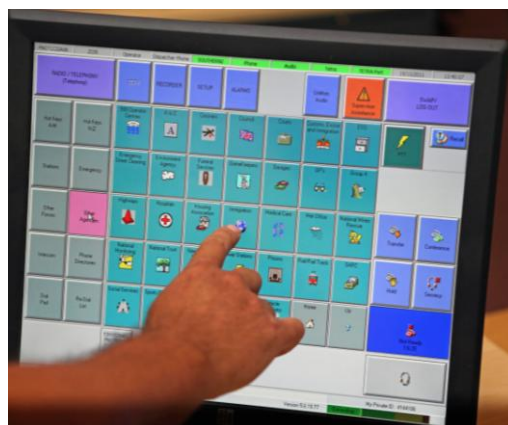


TETRA pooling also presents opportunities for cost savings. On top of the licence savings for each port, there are no hardware maintenance, power or cooling charges associated with pooling solutions from many other vendors. Fewer ports managed dynamically can therefore ensure availability while offering significantly less cost.

CORTEX and VISION offer operators a high degree of integration to prevent rekeying of information and allow TETRA and telephony features to be managed from the VISION PX user interface. CORTEX connects to the Force's Avaya telecommunications switch, to provide efficient call routing and call prioritisation, reducing response times to emergency calls.

CORTEX also automatically provides operators with the location and personal details of the caller as the call is answered. CORTEX immediately passes this information to VISION PX so the operator knows who's calling and can see where they are on the VISION PX integrated mapping just as the operator says "hello". For the increasing number of vehicles fitted with systems that automatically call the emergency services when involved in an accident, critical information such as vehicle registration, make, model, colour, direction of travel and whether the vehicle's airbags have been activated is provided. CORTEX interfaces with both BT's EISEC and Cable & Wireless's ALSEC to provide this service for all UK emergency calls. This enhanced level of information enables operators to vastly improve response times and effectively manage incidents.

Future steps will see further integration between the two platforms enabling even richer data sharing. "We're very pleased to have such an efficient and robust system in place, combining some of the best hardware and software available to UK Emergency Services," said Nottinghamshire's Langton. "But we recognise that there is an opportunity to drive further value from our investment, increasing support for officers in the field, improving our response to the public and increasing efficiency.



About APD Communications

With over 25 years of experience, APD is a global leader in control room, mobile information, resource location and tracking solutions. APD specialises in delivering mission-critical and business-critical solutions to organisations within the public sector, transport, security, logistics and the emergency services. APD's products are used in over 100 client sites in the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Customers include every UK Police Force (including The Metropolitan Police Service, Merseyside Police and Hampshire Police), the Abu Dhabi Police, the Romanian Government and leading organisations such as The Emirates Group and London Underground Limited.

About Fortek Computers Ltd

Fortek Computers Limited has been supplying Command, Control and Communications system to Emergency Response Agencies for 30 years. Fortek Computers has become a market leader here in the UK as well as delivering large scale solutions to multi-agencies overseas in Australia, Saudi Arabia, Belgium and Norway. The company's primary focus is delivering control room technology and is a software house supporting innovative product development for COTS delivery. Fortek also provides in house project services capability, implementation, training and support. Fortek also works alongside its strategic partners to provide a breadth of experience and expertise when delivering large scale end to end managed solutions.

Contact APD

- APD Communications Ltd, Head Office Newlands Centre, Inglemire Lane, Hull, HU6 7TQ, United Kingdom
- Sales and Marketing, Shenley Pavilions, Chalkdell Drive, Milton Keynes, MK5 6LB, United Kingdom
- UAE Office, Office 303, Silver Wave Tower, Al Meena Street, P.O. Box 31954, Abu Dhabi, UAE
- Tel: +44(0) 1482 808300 | Fax: +44 (0) 1482 803901 | UAE Tel: +971 (0) 2 6797022 | Email: info@apdcomms.com | Web: www.apdcomms.com