IT Adoption Leader Santa Clara County Fire Department Easily Configures RingCentral for Complex Communications Needs

Company profile

The Santa Clara County Fire Department serves Santa Clara County and the communities of Campbell, Cupertino, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, and Saratoga.

Year founded

1947

Website

sccfd.org

Headquarters

Los Gatos, CA

Size

Approximately 300 employees

> *By going with RingCentral, I immediately gained the ability to manage the system from anywhere, and I created redundancy in a few simple steps.*
> —**Eric Prosser,**
>   **Information Technology Officer**

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Covering an approximately 20-mile arc around the southern end of Silicon Valley, the Santa Clara County Fire Department (SCCFD) operates 15 fire stations, an administrative headquarters, a maintenance facility, 5 other support facilities, 19 pieces of apparatus, and 3 command vehicles to cover 128.3 square miles and a population of more than 226,700.

SCCFD is one of the few departments in California with its own IT department. Led by Eric Prosser, SCCFD's Information Technology Officer, the department puts IT to use in ways that help first responders save lives. For example, every fire truck is currently equipped with two iPads. As soon as a call comes in, one iPad® immediately displays the fastest route to the site as well as relevant information (location of sprinklers, fire escapes, etc.) if it's a commercial facility. The other iPad is used by medics to quickly enter information about the people being treated. This data is uploaded to the cloud and instantly available to the ambulance crews and hospital staff that take over their care.

Unique communications needs

When Prosser joined the department in 2012, each facility had its own limited PBX. These PBXs were old and constantly needing repairs with parts found on eBay. When a fire station's PBX went down, those employees couldn't receive or make calls until it was repaired. The department tasked Prosser to find a solution to not only fix these redundancy issues but also have the ability to expand their current system at HQ. Through an RFP process, Prosser looked at many solutions, but only a few met the needs of the department's unique environment such as a cloud-based unified communications as a service (UCaaS) solution that would cover the entire organization.

"We had no redundancy with the PBXs and no room for growth at our current business site," Prosser explains. "By going with a UCaaS solution, we could achieve redundancy through multiple internet connections and grow without limitations." (He set up the department with three levels of redundancy by contracting with three different ISPs, one being LTE.) Since the implementation, they have experienced one outage, which no one noticed.

In his search for the right UCaaS solution, one of Prosser's main considerations was the complexity of phone use by an organization in which phones are shared by three rotating shifts of people. This demands a lot more flexibility compared to a business office, for instance, where everyone has an assigned phone. Prosser needed to do things like set up speed dials and paging groups; integrate phones with third-party equipment such as external ringers, flashers, and a PA system; and have some calls but not others go to battalion chiefs, etc.

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> *With RingCentral being in the cloud, I no longer needed to support old systems and shop on eBay for parts. It was a hit-or-miss game, and we didn't always solve the problems.*
> —**Eric Prosser,**
>   **Information Technology Officer**

> *RingCentral's Project team was incredibly helpful. I would toss out a problem that needed solving, and the Project team would come back with several solutions to choose from so I could pick what would best fit SCCFD.*
> —**Eric Prosser,**
>   **Information Technology Officer**

RingCentral: robust, flexible, and easy to configure

After evaluating a number of solutions, Prosser chose RingCentral because it delivered the level of flexibility and configurability he needed at a great price. The department initially started to go with a different solution. "They promised we could do all of the things we needed to do, but ended up not delivering. It was a mess from both the user and administrative viewpoints," he recalls.

Prosser put in a lot of thought and time prior to the RingCentral deployment so that he could make the system as easy to use as possible. Actions like creating speed dials and ring groups, which would simplify the phones for end users, were easy for him using RingCentral's toolset through the administrative portal.

"From an application manager's point of view, RingCentral is easy to use," Prosser says. "RingCentral provides enough complexity in their basic toolset that I can get in there and do what I need to do. I don't have to call RingCentral every time I want to do something." Prosser did rely on RingCentral support for a few of the integrations, such as integrating the fire stations' PA systems and third-party ringers and flashers. "RingCentral's team was phenomenal in supporting us doing this," he adds.

Ultimately RingCentral gives the fire department a robust communications system with both a higher level of functionality and greater security. "By going with RingCentral, I immediately gained redundancy as well as the ability to manage the system from anywhere. If I happen to be somewhere outside the disaster area, I can keep my department connected as long as I have an internet connection. We can redirect phone calls and set up an emergency center very quickly, without much effort, as we have preprogrammed this in the system. Plus, the added reliability of not having to maintain hardware on 17 different sites is much easier with RingCentral at the helm," Prosser says.

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