INDUSTRY
State and local government

KEY CHALLENGES
- Ensure absolute stability in supporting 911 dispatch operators information access
- Enable easier access to multiple data sources for 911 dispatchers
- Extend virtual desktops to officers and executives in the field

SOLUTION
Halton Regional Police Service deployed VMware Horizon to deliver reliable and flexible virtual desktops to its 911 dispatchers and reduce their stress. Additionally, they deployed AirWatch Enterprise Mobility Management for secure mobility management.

BUSINESS BENEFITS
- Stable operating system for critical 911 dispatchers – reliable, fast, user-friendly
- Productivity improvements for police officers in the field and other executives
- Easier maintenance and operation for IT team
- Hardware flexibility
- Enhanced security

Halton Regional Police Service Dramatically Improves Information Access for 911 Dispatch Operators and Expands Mobility with VMware Horizon and AirWatch

The job of 911 dispatchers is stressful by nature. To quickly respond to emergencies, dispatchers in today's 911 communications centers require high-performing and reliable access to disparate, supporting information sources in addition to their computer-aided dispatch system. The efficiency of Halton Regional Police dispatchers was being challenged by the service's existing remote access system that continuously froze and/or locked dispatchers out, causing intolerable delays in receiving information.

The Halton Regional Police Information Technology department found an answer to this problem in VMware's desktop and application virtualization solution. With VMware Horizon®, dispatchers now have dependable and timely access to information they need, subsequently enhancing the level of service they provide. VMware Horizon has also enhanced the productivity of officers in the field, who depend on quick information to make decisions. Plus, with AirWatch® Enterprise Mobility Management™, the department's field officers and executives now enjoy greater mobility, information security, and flexibility in how they access information .

The Halton Region, located 30 minutes west of the City of Toronto, consists of the City of Burlington and the Towns of Halton Hills, Milton, and Oakville. It is home to 530,000 residents. The Halton Regional Police Service contributes to the safety of the region's residents with a highly professional and dedicated staff of 667 uniformed police officers and 290 civilian employees. In 2014, Halton Region was named the safest large municipality in Canada for the sixth year in a row.

The Challenge
Police departments rely on a high level of system availability and performance in their 911 dispatch operations, which include both computer-aided dispatch systems and ancillary systems that enhance 911 operator efficiency. The Halton Regional Police IT department

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VMWARE FOOTPRINT
- VMware Horizon
- AirWatch Enterprise Mobility Management

APPLICATIONS VIRTUALIZED
- Intergraph Dispatch CAD
- Intergraph Mobile Responder
- NICHE Records Management

PLATFORM
- VMware vSphere® on HP Blade Servers
- Dell Storage
- AirWatch on Apple iOS

originally provided remote access to its 911 ancillary system through a legacy remote access solution. This legacy system caused high anxiety for dispatchers due to its unreliability. It often froze or kicked them off the system and made it difficult for them to log in and out when they moved to new desks.

The computer-aided dispatch system is a proprietary application and is isolated and locked down to ensure performance and reliability. So when a dispatcher needed vital supporting information for officers on a service call, such as GPS coordinates or cell-phone data, the dispatcher was forced to log off the dispatch system to access the supporting information system. As the old legacy system was unreliable, dispatchers struggled with gaining access in a timely manner.

"That was painful," says Adam Woods, Senior Systems Engineer at Halton Regional Police Service. "They're receiving 911 calls and dispatching officers to those calls, so it's critical that they have access to this information at all times. Downtime is unacceptable. It came to the point where they were calling IT in the middle of night to reset sessions to be able to access supporting data."

The Solution

The Halton Regional Police IT department turned their focus to enhancing its legacy environment, but determined that option was too expensive. The team also debated adding extra computers at every desk so dispatchers could access other resources without logging off the 911 system, but again, that option was costly and inefficient. "Just having an available and reliable system is what we were after," Woods says. "And from an IT perspective, we wanted something we were confident would meet our requirements for performance and reliability."

Members of the Halton Regional Police IT team have worked with VMware in the past and were familiar with the ease and effectiveness of VMware solutions. This made VMware Horizon a natural choice. In addition, the IT department was already a user of AirWatch Enterprise Mobility Management software, so the VMware acquisition of AirWatch made Horizon even more appealing. To implement the VMware Horizon, the IT department spent two weeks with VMware professionals to learn the system and get comfortable with the environment.

Halton Regional Police further extended VMware Horizon to its Mobile Command Unit, which benefits from the system's functionality when out in the field. Also, VMware solutions are now a core part of the Service's business continuity plan, in the event of a natural disaster. If the Halton Regional Police Service ever needs to quickly relocate operations of its 911 center, it can now rely on dispatchers being able to get up and running remotely on VMware Horizon in a short timeframe.

Business Benefits

The Halton Regional Police 911 dispatchers are very happy with the new VMware Horizon system. The stability and reliability of the environment now allows 911 dispatchers to confidently access supporting information without the fear of risky system freezes, log-outs, or lockouts. "Having a reliable system they know will be available when they sit down at their desk makes their life easier," Woods says. "That's a huge benefit, being able to relieve that stress. They have a stressful job as it is."

Additionally, dispatchers now have immediate access to reliable and speedy Internet service, the capability to monitor social media feeds, and have quick access to Google Maps for addresses, phone numbers and other policy applications they need in emergency situations. In addition, VMware has provided Halton Regional Police dispatchers the capability to seamlessly switch between operational computer-aided dispatch computers to the virtual desktop without any conflicts or interruptions between sessions.

> *"This software enhances our organization by connecting quickly and easily. Often, in Communications there isn't time to wait for applications to load. The VMware Horizon solution allows quick access to applications which play a very important role with every call received on 911 or non-emergency call."*
>
> **- Halton Police Dispatcher**

"The fact that we have instant access to Google Maps was a godsend, especially when we were pinging a cellphone for a distressed resident and it wasn't in our area," said a Halton Police Dispatcher representative. "The old access system would take several minutes to load, which could mean the difference between life and death."

The IT department has also benefitted from the new and improved VMware Horizon as it has proved itself easy to maintain, and the reliability of the environment prevents emergency calls to IT staff in the middle of the night. The functionality of the Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) enables IT to push changes, such as a new application or a new setting en masse and instantaneously.

Both VMware Horizon and AirWatch Enterprise Mobility Management solutions give the department flexibility, mobility, and security. Halton Regional Police executives access their virtual desktops and applications on any number of devices, from Apple iPhones to Microsoft Surface tablets. They choose the hardware, while the IT team controls the applications and ensures a seamless experience. Executives in the field moving from one scene to the next can use a variety of proprietary applications at any time and do so securely. This makes them more efficient and effective.

"We're one of the safest communities in Canada, and we rely on technology from VMware to help provide that top-notch level of service," Woods says.

Looking Ahead

Halton Police is looking forward to piloting new mobile law enforcement applications leveraging the AirWatch platform and is constantly evaluating plans to push applications to front-line officers, further enhancing their productivity. With the goal of increasing public safety through officer efficiency and ease of access to critical information, Halton Regional Police is well positioned with the Airwatch Enterprise Mobility Management platform to do this. "This will allow them to be more efficient in the field," Woods says. "Access to information and the ability to relay information via a mobile platform means officers wouldn't have to drive back to the station to fill out reports,. The more time they're in the station is less time they're out on the road responding to calls for service and proactively keeping our residents safe."

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