

Location: Columbia County, WA

Product: MAX Call-Taking

## MAX Call-Taking Prepares PSAP for i3 ESInet

**The MAX Call-Taking system recently installed at the Columbia County 9-1-1 center is designed to make the most of the open-standards-based ESInet that will soon be deployed throughout Washington state.**

The state of Washington is in the process of implementing a Next-Generation (NG) 9-1-1 Emergency Services Internet Protocol Network (ESInet). The current plan is for the network to be phased in over a period of five years, with public safety answer points (PSAPs) connecting to it as time and their budgets allow.

This is an important development for public-safety and law-enforcement agencies throughout Washington. The ESInet will improve their ability to accept and use a variety of data, including text messages, video, images, and other bandwidth-intensive data files that narrowband systems can't support. It will also improve interoperability and the ability of PSAPs to share information and coordinate efforts during an emergency. Last but not least, the ESInet will provide improved levels of redundancy that will help protect the continuity of 9-1-1 operations, even if some circuits or end points become unavailable.

In preparation for the upcoming network, the Public Safety Communications and Emergency Management Center in Columbia County, Washington, has just replaced their outdated 9-1-1 phone system with Zetron's MAX Call-Taking system. This equips the agency with the latest-and-greatest IP-based 9-1-1 call-taking technology. The system is currently connected to the agency's legacy proprietary ESInet, but is ready and able to connect to the i3 ESInet as soon as it comes online.

### Columbia County and its public safety responsibilities

Columbia County is located in Southeastern Washington at the base of the Blue Mountains. Covering roughly 873 square miles, it is a region of rolling hills, expansive wheat fields, deep canyons, and rugged wilderness.

The Columbia County Public Safety Communications and Emergency Management Center serves as the area's primary PSAP. The scale and scope of the agency's responsibilities are typical of a center that serves a primarily rural area. They answer all of the county's 9-1-1 calls and provide dispatching for three fire jurisdictions, two ambulance companies, and the sheriff's office, which is the county's only law-enforcement agency.

### Time for new equipment

Several considerations contributed to Columbia County's decision to purchase a new 9-1-1 system. Although they could have opted to keep their old call-taking system and connect it to the new ESInet,



this approach would offer limited functionality and be unable to deliver Text-to-9-1-1 and other next-generation features the PSAP will eventually be required to provide. In addition, their aging 9-1-1 system was no longer performing reliably. They decided to purchase an IP-based 9-1-1 system that would provide updated features and allow them to take full advantage of the benefits the new ESInet will offer.

### Choosing MAX Call-Taking

Lisa Caldwell is the director of Columbia County's Public Safety Communications and Emergency Management Center. She says that replacing their call-taking system with Zetron's MAX Call-Taking was not a foregone conclusion. Far from it.

"We'd already decided to go with another vendor's system, when Scott Grimmett, who owns Industrial Communications, and Zetron territory manager, Eric Olsen, came by the PSAP for a visit," she explains. "In the course of things, Eric asked if we'd looked at MAX Call-Taking. I said no, we'd already made the decision to purchase equipment from the manufacturer of our existing 9-1-1 system. But we kept talking. Eric pulled up a YouTube video showing how MAX Call-Taking operates, and before he left, he handed me some documentation on the system. Afterwards, I discussed the system with my dispatchers and we watched the video together. They really liked what they saw, especially the system's unique GUI. Shortly thereafter, Eric and Industrial Communications followed up with a quote for Industrial Communications to install Zetron's MAX Call-Taking."

"We have a lot of trust in both Zetron and Industrial Communications," Caldwell continues. "We have a Zetron radio dispatch console that's performed very well for us, and Industrial has proven themselves over many years of servicing our equipment. If we had gone ahead and

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Director, Columbia Co. Public Safety Communications and Emergency Management Center

bought the system we’d been considering previously, the manufacturer would have had to service and maintain the system. But if we went with the Zetron system, Industrial would be our service provider. To us, that was a big plus. After carefully weighing the options, we decided to purchase MAX Call-Taking.”

### Setting a high bar

Columbia County purchased the system through the National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO). Caldwell, who was new to this funding mechanism, says that the process could have been overwhelming, but Zetron walked her through it, step by step.

“Zetron was just phenomenal,” she says. “They worked with me to ensure that the contract language was complete and correct. Zetron’s customer service during this process set a bar that remained high throughout the entire project.”

### Staging and implementation

Once the funding had been secured, the three-console Zetron system was ordered and shipped to Industrial Communications, and they began setting it up at their shop.

“Over a period of several weeks while all the parts came in, we built the system into the cabinet, set up all three positions, and programmed the system to do what the agency needed it to do,” says Industrial Communications engineer, Thor Wiegman. “We left the system running for a few weeks to give it time to ‘burn in’ and allow any equipment failures to surface. None did.”

Wiegman adds that, at the same time they were installing MAX Call-Taking the PSAP was also implementing a new computer aided dispatch (CAD) system.

“Moving the dispatchers from a 20-year-old 9-1-1 system to brand new technology while they’re also learning a new CAD system was a tall order,” he says. “But we were able to make this transition without any interruptions.”

### Applying past ESInet experience

Zetron’s past experiences integrating equipment to next-generation networks served them well during the implementation for Columbia County.

“Even though deployments for different agencies have their own unique characteristics, they also have many elements in common,” says Zetron senior project engineer, John Scott. “The projects we’d already completed in Washington state contributed significantly to the success of our implementation for Columbia County.”

### Adding features, cutting costs

Scott says they employed several approaches to simplify the PSAP’s operations and cut costs. “We integrated their new MAX Call-Taking and their existing Zetron dispatch system so they could both be controlled through a single headset,” he says. “This allows dispatchers to move seamlessly back and forth between the different systems. We also integrated MAX Call-Taking to their existing ShoreTel phone system through SIP trunking. Not only was this an easy solution, but it eliminated the need for more-costly interfaces and connections between the new and legacy equipment. Their MAX Call-Taking system is equipped with the software they’ll need to field next-generation voice and text calls when the state is ready to support those services.”

### A committed, long-term customer

Columbia County’s MAX Call-Taking system went live in June of 2016; it’s getting rave reviews. “I’m so impressed with the quality of the equipment and customer service we got during this project,” says Lisa Caldwell. “We’re now set up to connect to the new ESInet and will soon be ready for Text-to-9-1-1. Plus, in the next few years, when it’s time to replace our radio system, we can upgrade to Zetron’s MAX Dispatch and have a uniform look and feel across both our call-taking and dispatch consoles. There’s no question that we are committed to being long-term Zetron customers,” she adds. “Zetron delivered on every single thing they promised.”



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