CASE STUDY

Delaware Valley Regional High School

SOLUTION SUMMARY

- **Eastern DataComm** integrated diverse technologies that provide automated communications in the event of an emergency.

- The ShoreTel(Mitel) Unified Communications platform serves as the foundation of the solution, enabling notifications and lockdown procedures to be triggered by entering a code on a ShoreTel phone or Mobility app.

- A new PA system works in concert with the ShoreTel(Mitel) phones and **Eastern DataComm's** Lockdown and Emergency Notification System to automatically play certain prerecorded announcements.

- The solution also includes strobe lights and digital signage for visual notification.

- A radio based solution enables the installation of speakers and strobe lights across the campus, including outdoor areas.

- ShoreTel(Mitel) Mobility app enables administrators and other personnel to initiate lockdown procedures remotely and to summon help in the event of an emergency at an outdoor location.

Eastern DataComm develops an innovative solution that helps **Delaware Valley Regional High School District** automatically initiate lockdown procedures and send out emergency notifications.

Delaware Valley Regional High School District serves students in grades 9 through 12 who live in the five surrounding municipalities. Set amid the rolling hills of Hunterdon County, NJ, the campus is one of the most beautiful in the state, and with about 1,000 students, the district fosters a strong sense of community, family and school spirit.

Even in this pastoral setting, the district is acutely aware of the need to protect students and staff from potential threats. In 2013, the district began looking for a partner that could help enhance building security, facilitate lockdown procedures and ensure prompt notifications in a lockdown situation.

"We were having situations in which people would come into the building during a lockdown or evacuation drill because they didn't realize what was going on. We needed a way to communicate with people coming up to the building," said Matt Cirigliano, IT Manager, **Delaware Valley Regional High School District**. "But we also needed to improve our lockdown capabilities when it's not a drill. We needed a communications system that would allow us to notify administrators, staff and people inside and outside the building in the time frame recommended by state police."

One of the challenges **Delaware Valley** faced was the age of its facilities. Some of the areas of the building were 60 years old, with a legacy communications infrastructure that had been added onto over time. The district reached out to **Eastern DataComm** for help.

"How quickly you respond to an incident is what saves lives."

Teresa Berna, Delaware Valley Regional High School

"I had worked with **Eastern DataComm** in a previous position, and was familiar with their phone systems and how they could integrate them with PA systems," said Teresa Barna, Business Administrator and Board Secretary, **Delaware Valley Regional High School District**. "We knew we needed to upgrade and integrate our systems, but we had more questions than answers. **Eastern DataComm** came up with a solution that was very effective for us."

AUTOMATED SYSTEMS

The first step was to replace the district's 30-year-old phone system with a ShoreTel(Mitel) Unified Communications platform. In addition to providing a modern communications infrastructure, the ShoreTel(Mitel) solution integrates with **Eastern DataComm's** Lockdown and Emergency Notification System (LENS) to make it easy for teachers, administrators and staff to initiate emergency procedures by dialing a code on any ShoreTel(Mitel) phone or through an app installed on smartphones.

"Let's say a teacher sees somebody with a gun. She enters a code on a phone and it dials 911 and alerts our administrative staff as to the location of the problem so we can try to determine exactly what's going on," Cirigliano said. "Entering codes on any ShoreTel(Mitel) phone or the mobile app triggers the LENS system."

All of the notifications happen immediately and automatically — a critical component that removes the human element from the emergency.

"How quickly you respond to an incident is what saves lives," Barna said. "The New Jersey State Police say we should notify everyone in the building and initiate lock-down, evacuation or shelter-in-place procedures within about 30 seconds after a threat is recognized. When you rely on human behavior in an emergency, there are no guarantees. You can drill and drill but when an actual situation happens, humans respond differently.
The automation was important to us, as well as the ability to initiate the process from anywhere."

Eastern DataComm revamped the district's PA system, and integrated it with the LENS system so that sequences of prerecorded announcements are played when the system is triggered. The system also activates strobe lights and LED sign boards that provide visual clues in noisy areas, to building visitors and for hearing-impaired persons.

"We have strobe lights in the gym, music room, cafeteria, wood shop, auditorium — areas that could be loud and filled with people," said Cirigliano. "**Eastern DataComm** is also helping us with digital signage that automatically displays messages for people coming up to the building."

SAVING LIVES

Of course, a high school is more than a building — **Delaware Valley** wanted to ensure seamless communications with the athletic fields and other outdoor facilities. **Eastern DataComm** implemented a wireless network and installed speakers and strobe lights at strategic locations across campus.

"The devices communicate over the same radio bands that first responders use. We had to register for an FCC license but it's well worth it because our whole facility is covered without having to run wiring," Cirigliano said. "Everybody focuses on lockdown but you also have to think about after-school activities or PE classes that are held outside."

Delaware Valley also opted for the ShoreTel(Mitel) Mobility solution, which links the phone system to administrators' smartphones via Wi-Fi. Administrators are notified of an emergency wherever they are and can utilize the notification system remotely. Gym teachers can also use the Mobility app to summons help if an emergency occurs on a sports field, and the district is looking to extend the app to other teachers and staff.

Although school district budgets are always tight, the district received a grant that funded 40 percent of the project. The original grant request focused on upgrading the PA system, but **Delaware Valley** was able to expand the project to include the phone system and other components.

"**Eastern DataComm** helped us write the scope of the project, which encompasses a complete communications system replacement with a focus on safety," said Barna. "The Department of Education reviewed it and it met with their approval."

The **Eastern DataComm** team continues to support **Delaware Valley** and help the district explore ways to build upon and improve the solution.

"We couldn't have done this without their help," Cirigliano said. "I hope to God we never have to use this system but in the event that we do, we all feel better knowing that we're better prepared. It's all about saving lives."

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