



## Use Case: Active Shooter

### *Scenario*

A narrow strip of land, three-quarters-of-a-mile long, with a large lake on one side, and a large bay on the other. On one end of the strip is an outlet for water from the bay to the lake, spanned by a bridge. The outlet separates two police and two fire jurisdictions. The strip of land originally had a railroad track, now gone, supported on a high berm, running its length. A narrow road spans the length of the land strip, paralleling the old railroad track bed. Tightly clustered cottages and small homes occupy the shores.

In the middle of this area, a deranged man sets fire to his car early in the morning, and then calls 911 to report the fire. A neighbor awakens to the fire, and also calls 911 reporting the car fire next to a house. The two volunteer fire departments and the police are alerted and begin responding.

As the first fire engine pulls up to the scene, the man, from a position of cover on the railroad berm, opens fire on the firemen with a high-powered rifle. Within seconds, four firemen and a passerby are shot. Shortly after, the on-scene police officer engages the shooter, takes cover, and calls for assistance. A firefight ensues.

The incident, which moments before was a routine car fire, is now a full-blown active shooter incident, stretching over three-quarters of-a-mile of occupied houses, and four police jurisdictions: Town A, Town B, County Sheriff, and State Police. In addition to these four police agencies, other police agencies in the area also respond, as does the county's SWAT team.

Communications are hampered by two choke points largely caused by light overnight shift staffing: the Emergency Communications Department (ECD) dispatchers and the on-scene Police Incident Commander, initially operating alone. Radio and phone traffic in the ECD is intense as both fire and police agencies attempted to convey critical situational awareness between the trapped firefighters and police response forces. This condition persists until sufficient augmentation of command staff relieves the congestion. Between the police dispatch channels and the area police tactical channels, radio communication is not a major issue for local police agencies, however the federal agencies involved do not have interoperable radio channels with the local agencies. Ordering resources and coordination between agencies is hampered.



Cell phone coverage in the area is adequate, however the officers are approaching the end of their shifts and the now-constant cell-talk rapidly drains batteries. Command staff have to borrow cell phones from responding officers which changes command staff contact numbers. Call-back numbers left for contact are occasionally no longer operational, or the phones are frequently busy. Point-to-point calls between jurisdictional commanders trying to coordinate response efforts increases exponentially as strategy is discussed and then is repeated several times to the different agencies, and has to be frequently updated as it is outdated by events.

### *The Problem*

Imagine the workload of a shift supervisor in Town A, having overall command, having to deal with the following:

- Rescue of civilians in the hot zone that have been driven out as their homes caught fire
- Rescue of the wounded firefighters
- Limited officer availability in both towns
- An active shooter area  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile long, occupied by sleeping residents
- Coordination of helicopter requests
- Boat requests (for water-side containment)
- SWAT requests
- Night-vision requests
- Other agency response requests
- Coordination of staging on both ends
- Assembly of containment teams
- Assignment of search and clearing teams
- Coordination of rescue teams and potential fire and medical responses because the fire has spread to multiple homes

Compound this police coordination effort with the local command post physical scene. The fire department wants to know when the police will rescue their wounded personnel, and what protection the police could give to some effort to contain the fires, which, if left unchecked, contribute to the displaced civilian problem. Staging officers are asking for assignments for incoming police personnel. The security perimeter is being expanded while all this is going on to assure containment, and to prevent local citizens from entering the area as live news broadcasts spread the word.

### *The Solution*

The REDCOM CrucialConnect™ Crisis Conferencing Solution (CCS) is the answer to providing coordination support to the Incident Commander (IC). By adding direct dispatcher conference support, the IC can now concentrate on managing the crisis and not have to make repetitive phone calls or deal with cell phone failures.

Here's how it works: the 911 dispatcher, using the CCS terminal screen, activates a 16-party meet-me conference bridge for use as the tactical planning bridge, and then notifies the IC of its availability, and gives the dispatchers Priority Queue number. The Town A IC selects Town B commander, Sheriff's Office commander, State Police commander, and the SWAT commander to join him on the conference by calling into the system. As the calls arrive in the dispatcher's queue, they are authenticated by the dispatcher, an identifier name is typed in, and the caller placed into the conference. This process tightly controls access to the tactical planning discussion, keeping the planning confidential, and all members are identified to all CrucialConnect CCS terminal screens displaying that conference (permissions-based). The same process is repeated for others requested by the IC, or if a new cell phone is required.

### *Benefits*

1. The IC is in constant contact with major decision makers.
2. Telephone "tag" is eliminated.
3. The dispatcher can join the planning conference to report updates to the IC.
4. The dispatcher can add any other requested party to any conference.
5. Cell phones can be changed out with no impact on reachability of the Tactical Command Post (TCP).
6. All dispatchers can monitor their CrucialConnect CCS screens to see who is in each conference and who is talking in that conference.
7. The value of immediate information exchange for situational awareness cannot be understated.
8. Subject Matter Experts (SME) are available and in the information loop before arrival.
9. The decision cycle is accelerated because command staff is "up to speed" before arrival.

