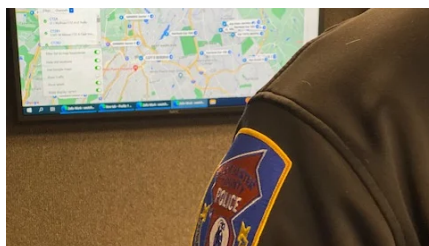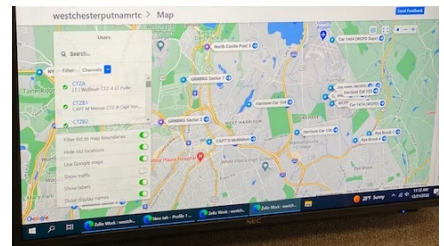By
Christy Milam

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Westchester County Unites 46 Police Departments with Zello for First Responders

Emergency   network radios   Push-to-Talk

Westchester County is the most populous county north of New York City, with approximately one million residents spread across six cities, 19 towns and 23 villages. In its effort to protect the safety and security of all its citizens and visitors, the Westchester County Police Department is continually challenged by geography and disparate police departments.

"Westchester is an interesting place. There's 46 different police departments within Westchester. Each of those police departments all have separate radio systems, separate record systems, and all these things that are kind of tied into the past," said Lt. Brian Hess, CO of the Real Time Crime Center.

Senior Crime Analyst, Danielle O'Mara, also has a unique perspective to the internal challenges.

"We have 46 different agencies, 46 different chiefs, 46 different personalities and everyone has their own way of doing things."

Bringing together these disparate systems was one of the goals of Lt. Hess and his partner Sgt. Kyle McCarrick. While searching for a better communications system for their Real-Time Crime Center (RTC), they discovered Zello. RTCs are hubs where police ingest and analyze surveillance, intelligence, and data from a number of sources in real-time.

"Our job is to try to bring all these things together and we started out with radios and cameras and tried to come up with a unified platform. Once we got all of that accomplished, we moved on to communications which brought us to where we are now. It had shown a light on the fact that our communications were abysmal," said Sgt. McCarrick.

Before Zello, each department called a hotline that all the dispatchers throughout the county had on their dispatch desk. They put out the description of a suspect and vehicle, and the dispatchers would have to repeat it to their departments in each

different county. O'Mara said, "By the time you get that information, there's such a huge lag, you may have missed it all together. On top of that, the hotline goes down all the time. Sometimes we get a phone call that it's down and they're not able to dispatch." Sgt. McCarrick added, "It just doesn't work. It's the opposite of efficiency."

Now with every county on the same Zello channel, officers queue up their devices and just listen. Lt. Hesse said, "If you don't have an account already, boom. Make an account, scan the QR code, and then everyone's on the same system in no time at all. So that was like the biggest win for us. Everyone's like, "Oh wow, this is like a game changer.'"

Sgt. Craig Scatola, the Administrative Sergeant Patrol Division of the Yorktown Police Department, said that they researched a few LMR options that didn't work because of the typography and geography. He took the lead for his department's deployment and landed on Zello because of its unlimited configuration. "The big thing that draws me to Zello is that it's multi-platform; device agnostic. The ability to run multiple gateways has been really well-received, and the ability for on-the-fly channels for super-admins who are behind the scenes makes it easy to add and delete channels."

"It's seamless compared to traditional radios or LMR."

Yorktown settled on Zello as their interoperability solution and it has transformed their operation. "Now officers are able to push police intelligence out into the field immediately."

"I think for us to be able to talk to 3,000 people at the push of a button is amazing. It went from minutes to seconds."

O'Mara called the success phenomenal. "For real-time crime, it makes sense for us to communicate in real time. It's such a user-friendly platform, even for the older generation or those who are more wary of technology."

Adopting Zello has helped bridge the relationship between Westchester County and NYPD. "This is the best relationship we've ever had with the NYPD and state police. The silos have all officially been broken down, just by this whole idea and concept we've been pushing out. They bought-in and invested in it and they love it!"

Now that departments are invested in Zello, there's no going back. "These relationships that have been created are groundbreaking. It's all from a concept that my lieutenant proposed. They created it. So to be able to watch them, it's been really special," said O'Mara.

Zello's full suite of emergency response and push-to-talk software is free for all first responder organizations worldwide.