

## LGdispatch Improves Communication and Saves Lives in Colleton County

Colleton County, South Carolina



To most eyes, Colleton County's unspoiled coastline, lush river banks, wildlife-rich marshlands and vast farmland represent a serene paradise.

To a rescue worker racing to reach the scene of an emergency, the county is 1,100 square miles of possibilities, where a single wrong turn or misunderstood address can have dire consequences.

Today, the likelihood of that happening is much more remote; thanks to steps the Colleton County Sheriff's Office has taken over the past two years to upgrade its Geographic Information System.

"We know that in an emergency, people panic and may give the wrong address," said Chief Deputy Ted Stanfield. "If this happens in a densely populated urban area, the rescue workers may have to regroup and drive a few blocks or a few miles to the right location. In Colleton County, they could be 30 or 40 minutes in the wrong direction. And, because we dispatch for so many agencies, a mistake in address could cause us to send a crew into the wrong jurisdiction. We can't let that happen."



The Sheriff's Office runs the Dispatch Center, which serves the Sheriff's Office, the Fire/ Rescue Department and several smaller municipal police and fire departments. It recently installed Geographic Technologies Department's LG Dispatch as part of a larger initiative to upgrade its technology.

"Several years ago the County was named in a lawsuit involving a miscommunication between the dispatcher and a 911 caller which resulted in our Fire/Rescue crew being misdirected. It's impossible to know

whether the outcome of the emergency would have been different if our people had arrived earlier, but we all wanted to make sure it didn't happen again."

Now, with LGdispatch, operators can see the caller's location on a large map, virtually eliminating the potential for verbal errors. The software pulls data from the County's Sungard-HTE database and from layers created by the County's GIS Department and the Sheriff's Office 911 Addressing Division.

"Our operators love it. When the calls pop up they can see information from the GIS layers that tell them which roads are dirt, which are county maintained, where the water areas are, where the fire hydrants are and much more. Latitude/longitude information is also available, which is helpful when we have to bring in a helicopter for medical flights and establishing landing zones," he said. "Or, if our officers are involved in a man hunt, for example, 911 dispatch can tell where the nearest roads are and if there's a pond or waterway nearby. It's invaluable. I call it a poor man's AVL."

"This county is so large geographically that there are many areas our operators have never even seen. It's impossible for anyone to be familiar with the entire county," Stanfield said. "Having the visual help of a map is critical."

Even though the County is large, its population is relatively small, making for a limited tax base.

"We have a lot of area to cover with limited financial resources; the cost of the number of communications towers alone is substantial," Stanfield said. "But I think we've done an excellent job of finding grants and other sources of funding that stretch our taxpayers' dollars and give them the service they deserve."

The County's land mass presents other challenges as well.

"They don't call us the low country for nothing," he said. "Our geography definitely creates technical issues for transmissions."

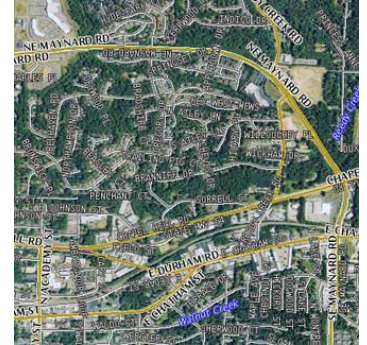
The County is currently installing GTG's LG Address to allow field personnel to update the GIS database, and is planning to use information obtained from digital cameras and equipment in emergency vehicles to capture GIS information to download to the server.

LGaddress will help the department eliminate many manual, time-consuming tasks associated with assigning addresses to agency jurisdictions.

"LGaddress gives us great visual capabilities. We can draw a box around an area on the map, assign them to a certain Fire/Rescue battalion, for example, and that will automatically update our CAD information. When a call comes in, the system can accurately recommend a responding agency."

"I know the technology that makes all of this possible is very sophisticated, but for us, the impact it makes on our jobs and our citizens' lives is very basic," Stanfield said.

"Someone dials 911 and their location pops up on a map in the dispatch center. That simple action allows the dispatcher to get help to the scene faster than ever before, and that is why we are here."



## Geographic Technologies Group

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