

HOW MAPPING CAPABILITIES IMPROVE DISPATCH EFFICIENCY



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Emergency dispatchers are confronted with dramatic extremes every day when they arrive at work: they must help callers that are dealing with what could be the most stressful or dangerous moment of their lives, all while needing to remain calm to gather information and provide appropriate aid. They need to not only understand the emergency, its severity, and its location but also provide potentially life-saving instructions and next steps until first responders are able to arrive on location.

So, how are dispatchers able to face such extreme stress while remaining calm enough to mitigate the situation at hand? Beyond receiving extensive training and having the unwavering support of their family and fellow dispatchers, one of the most significant pieces to the puzzle is having access to the right technology.

DISPATCH & PATROL TECHNOLOGY MUST-HAVES

Computer-aided dispatch (CAD) systems provide instantaneous and seamless communication between a person in an emergency situation, a dispatcher and



a first responder. For CAD systems to be fully effective, they must use advanced technologies that connect all the dots between those three parties.

The first dot to connect is the one between the dispatcher and the individual who dialed 9-1-1. It can be difficult for a dispatcher to gather all the necessary information about an emergency from the person on the phone, so a CAD system must be able to access vital details about the caller as soon as the call is answered. An important feature to look for in a CAD solution is E911 integration—a system that automatically pinpoints a caller's geographic location and phone number through coordination with telephone providers and displays the necessary information on the dispatcher's computer screens. This data then allows dispatchers to share vital information with first responders quickly.

In order for dispatchers to share such details with the first responders, they must have access to another important feature in a CAD program: silent dispatch. Silent dispatch sends assignments from the dispatcher directly to the mobile patrol system within an officer's vehicle. The assignment includes the location, status, and relevant information of an emergency so officers can deploy the proper response team quickly.

While all information that is exchanged between a dispatcher and first responders is critical, the most useful is the emergency's location. The E911 feature will only share an address or cell phone coordinates that can be translated into an address, which still needs to be accurately mapped to actually be helpful. CAD systems that integrate GPS mapping services, therefore, give organizations the tools they need to quickly and effectively respond to an emergency.

MAPPING SHEDS LIGHT ON DARK SITUATIONS

Map integration is a relatively new feature to CAD programs, but one that has been highly transformative for dispatchers and first responders. In order to fully understand its impact, it's important to look back at what the dispatch process was like without such integrations.

Prior to mapping, dispatchers and first responders were essentially traveling blind unless they were highly familiar with an area. For example, if an EMS crew received a location for an emergency on Main Street, they could head to Main Street on the east side of their city, when in actuality, the emergency was on Main Street on the west side of the city. This type of confusion is more common than one might think, especially in larger municipalities.

Another example of the importance of mapping capabilities lies within the use of automatic vehicle location (AVL) tracking for dispatchers. AVL technology allows dispatchers to see which response vehicles are nearest to an emergency. With the addition of mapping capabilities, dispatchers can quickly decide which vehicle to send to a scene by reviewing the recommendations from their CAD system and making a quick scan of the map to see who is closest. By using AVL technology in conjunction with mapping, dispatchers and first responders are able to lower their response time and thus improve safety.

The difference between not having mapping capabilities and having them is like night and day. Quality mapping is not only critical in helping dispatchers and first responders visualize the location of an emergency and prepare for what they will be facing but also extremely helpful in improving efficiencies within an organization. A dispatcher can share an emergency's exact mapped location with officers with a click of a button, and that same map will immediately appear on the officer's mobile patrol screen. There is no longer a need to explain a location, thus allowing response teams to move faster than ever before and improve emergency outcomes.

A MAP PROVIDES MUCH MORE THAN A LOCATION

Integrated mapping capabilities within CAD programs are capable of more than simply providing an image of an emergency's location. When searching for a CAD program with such integrated capabilities, it's important to look for those that can go one—or even two—steps further.

While a location marker on a map is helpful, a CAD system that also allows for map routing and directions can improve dispatch efficiencies even more. If an officer is headed to the scene of an emergency, they will already have the map up on their mobile patrol computer. And, rather than having to open a different application to find the most efficient route to get there, they can simply start driving and receive directions along the way within the same program.

While the benefits of a map integration are more obvious for the dispatchers that work directly with a CAD program,



this feature is also beneficial for administrators or supervisors within a dispatch center or police department. With mapping integration, these teams are able to access the mapping data and use it for running reports and conducting analyses of recent events to identify incident hot spots. They can also review the response process and time visually by employing the "playback" tool found in various CAD systems. This tool allows a user to go back to a time period on the map and see the exact movement of first responders as it occurred. Visualization of an event at this level is often critical in logging an emergency event and provides added context to the timeline.

Overall, mapping enables everyone involved in emergency response to gain a broader perspective of what is happening and thus respond more efficiently and with a better success rate. Without mapping capabilities, dispatch teams could encounter far more stress in an already stressful set of circumstances.

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ABOUT OMNIGO

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Omnigo solutions have helped law enforcement and security professionals increase staff productivity by up to 25%, reduce compliance risk, and show measured improvements in safety and security. **To request a free demo, call 1.866.421.2374 or email sales@omnigo.com.**