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## **CASE STUDY: PAPERLESS INCIDENT REPORTING APACHE JUNCTION (AZ) POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**Apache Junction Police Department:** The City of Apache Junction has more than 34,000 residents and is located in the Phoenix Metropolitan area, nestled in the shadows of the Superstition Mountains. The Apache Junction Police Department has more than 60 police officers.

**Existing Environment:** Proprietary CAD/RMS with paper incident reporting.

**Problem:** The overall problem that the agency needed to fix was inconsistent incident data. The handwritten face sheet of the incident report was sometimes illegible, did not present a professional image to peers and colleagues, did not represent the agency to its citizens and the community as technologically up to date, and increased the workload in the records department. Narratives were handwritten after the fact and appended to the handwritten face sheet at a later time. Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) codes and descriptions were not standardized. There were no mandatory fields and the UCR/AIBRS information required for statutory reporting was inconsistent and sometimes missing. Incident data from the handwritten paper reports had to be entered manually into the proprietary RMS.

A related problem that the agency needed to fix was that it was very time-consuming to shuffle paper back and forth between the officers and the

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sergeants for approval as well as with the records staff for gathering missing or incorrect data. Reports sometimes got lost, and corrections sometimes were not made. The paper-based incident reporting process exacerbated the time delays in disseminating the information to those who needed it.

**Project Objective:** Find a paperless incident-reporting software application that interfaces to the existing proprietary CAD/RMS, is in keeping with professional law enforcement practices and policies, and moves the Apache Junction Police Department into the 21<sup>st</sup> century technologically. Must-haves were in-field and in-car wireless access, time savings, and incident report forms data entry with a focus on an officer-friendly reporting system that provides consistent and complete incident data.

**Project Goals:** Ensure that supervisors review officers' reports and can be held accountable. Eliminate duplicate data entry from handwritten reports to the RMS by records personnel. Use agency forms in the system to accelerate user adoption and reduce training time.

**Selection Process:** Internal meetings were held with all of the personnel involved in the incident reporting process – officers, supervisors, commanders, records, information technology (IT). Vendor references were thoroughly checked. Telephone conversations were held with personnel in multiple agencies that were currently using the software and/or who were directly involved with the Vendor's implementation. Among all of Presynct Technologies' references, only two issues were identified – the font size in a report was too small, and the narrative section did not properly align on the page. Presynct's reference agencies both said that the issues were resolved immediately upon bringing them to Presynct Technologies' attention. All of Presynct's references confirmed that the incident-reporting software delivered exactly what was promised.

**Benefits Achieved:** There has been a vast improvement in the Police Department's public image. Responses to public records requests now present a professional image and reflect positively on the Police Department. A well-written, consistent, thorough report is provided instead of the handwritten, sometimes illegible copy formerly provided from the paper-based process. The built-in spellchecker takes care of misspelled words.

There has been an improvement in the Police Department image among our peers and colleagues. Report copies that are provided to other law enforcement agencies and district attorneys are now processed faster and distributed electronically.

There is an ongoing reduction in indirect costs for paper, envelopes, postage, copier supplies, printer supplies, etc.

Overall report turnaround time is significantly improved. Complete and consistent incident data gets into the hands of officers in the field within hours instead of days or sometimes weeks.

Incident report flow and availability are greatly improved. There has been a significant shortening in the time gaps between the creation, approval-rejection processing, distribution, and statutory (UCR/AIBRS) reporting.

The auto-populate feature in the forms eliminates duplicate data entry by the officer and reduces errors. Repetitive demographic information automatically flows to other pages in the report where it is required. The flow is both backwards and forwards, so that if a correction is made on any page, the correction flows to all pages.

Unlike paper incident report forms, a Presynct report in progress can not get lost or misplaced in the computer. Before Presynct, approval and processing of the paper-based incident report was slow and lacked accountability. With

Presynct, officers can write reports in the field or in the department. Supervisors can review and approve reports in car, in the field, or in the department. Supervisors can confirm that a report has been started within a reasonable period of time after an incident and that the report is timely completed.

Supervisors especially like the approval-rejection process. As soon as the officer writes a report, it goes into the supervisor's queue for approval. The supervisor can either approve the report or reject it and send comments with the rejection to the officer. Immediately after a report is rejected, it goes back to the officer's queue for correction, after which it returns to the supervisor's queue for approval of the corrections. Upon final approval, the incident report is available for search and retrieval by any authorized user.

Incident data on reports in progress is available as needed. As soon as a user hits the "Save" button on a report, that data is immediately available to authorized users. If an officer starts a report and is interrupted to take a call, the data and the report in progress are not held up because the report has not yet been approved.

The approval-rejection process is configurable in the system. Apache Junction chose to route the supervisor-approved report to records for final review, auto-upload into the existing RMS, and UCR reporting.

### **Lessons Learned:**

- Everyone involved in the incident-reporting process must participate in the selection and implementation planning process for success.
- Existing processes and flow should be analyzed thoroughly prior to final selection to ensure that the system will meet the agency's needs and provide the desired benefits.
- Early involvement by the Administrative and Patrol Commanders is essential.

- Go-Live should closely follow training.
- Consideration should be given to refresher training after Go-Live.
- User group training should include an overview of how the entire system works.

**User Feedback:**

**Patrol Officer**, *"I read all the HELP files last night instead of writing reports. I learned a lot and discovered the problem I was having using the system wasn't a system problem."*

**Supervisory Sergeant**, *"It's so much simpler to look at reports. I really like the queues and knowing a report is started."*

**Records Supervisor**, *"We once had an officer put a paper report in the Sergeant's tray, and it fell out landing between the desk and a printer. That can't happen with Presynct. Reports can't get lost, officers are forced to make corrections, and the auto-populate feature cuts down on errors."*

**Detective**, *"I love it!"*

**Network Administrator**, *"I can definitely see a benefit to the Department."*

**Administrative Commander**, *"We wanted a professional-looking, paperless system that would be easy to use and save time. And that's what we got!"*