

County Decides to Let Experts: Sentinel Offender Services to Handle Monitoring Center Activities

Tippecanoe County Indiana Electronic Monitoring Program Includes RF, GPS

The Issues

Implementing an effective electronic monitoring program involves more than the equipment used by the probation offender population. A substantial amount of computer equipment and software runs in the background to process and store alarm, event and participant information. Some companies offer programs with low equipment prices up front and then grow their profit margins by charging extra for computer hardware, software and technical support. Agencies who commit to in-house monitoring centers may not realize they are also making a commitment to long-term in-house technical support for their back-end monitoring platforms, including integration to newer components and equipment within a few years after the initial purchase.

The Challenges

Tippecanoe County was challenged by the technical aspects of its electronic monitoring program. The County was spending precious time and money on the operation and maintenance of its electronic monitoring platform. This diverted resources away from the primary task, which was to supervise a growing probation offender population. To keep their electronic monitoring program running, Tippecanoe County personnel had to have substantial technical expertise in addition to their sworn duties as probation officers.

Background

Tippecanoe County is the eighth-largest county in Indiana, with a population of more than 150,000. Tippecanoe County has been a Sentinel Offender Services electronic monitoring customer since 2002. This customer's program has grown from Radio Frequency (RF) electronic monitoring equipment only, to now include Global Positioning System (GPS) probation offender participant tracking. Tippecanoe County added GPS tracking to its electronic monitoring program in 2004. The population of offender participants in Tippecanoe County comprises offenders referred by the local court system, as well as courtesy supervision cases transferred from surrounding counties.

Approach

Tippecanoe County was using a localized computer system to host its electronic monitoring platform. This was legacy equipment based on the business model used by a competitor who owned the account until 2002, when Sentinel Offender Services purchased this competitor. In 2004, Tippecanoe County completed a transition to the Sentinel Offender Services Monitoring Center Functionality. Our approach with Tippecanoe County was straightforward and simple: Convert all monitoring services over from the County's legacy system and equipment and migrate to our Sentinel Offender Services / World-Class Monitoring Center. Our state-of-the-art National Monitoring Center professionally tracks and manages a daily national population of more than 8,000 offenders and staffs operations around the clock. This 3,000-square-foot facility

receives stores and disseminates information generated by each device 24 hours a day, seven days a week 365 days a year. The Sentinel Monitoring Center is located within our corporate facility in Irvine, California.

Solution

Tippecanoe County chose to use Sentinel Offender Services' Monitoring Center to take advantage of the reliability and detailed redundancy in our network equipment, data storage, backup telephone lines and uninterruptible power supply. This move to our Monitoring Center decreased the county's liability and reduced the maintenance overhead required to operate their monitoring program. Our Monitoring Center is completely self-contained and staffed by professionals who average more than five years electronic monitoring experience.

Following are statistics about our Sentinel World-Class Monitoring Center:

- Handles 8,500 incoming phone calls per month from our clients, officers and agencies
- Makes 21,800 outgoing phone calls per month
- Receives 1.45 million incoming call-ins per month from individual monitoring units
- Responds to and manages details associated with 5,400 offender participant generated alarms per day
- Live operators answer 96 percent of all voice phone calls within 8 seconds
- On-hold wait-time four seconds or less

There are other highlights in the relationship between Tippecanoe County and Sentinel Offender Services. We provide Tippecanoe County with an On-Site Sentinel Offender Services Field Technician responsible for the installation and removal of equipment, inventory control, offender enrollment, schedule changes, and daily reports to supervising officers. The Sentinel Offender Services' field technician also collects statistical data for the agency to track offender patterns and success rates. By placing a field technician on-site in Tippecanoe County, Indiana, Sentinel Offender Services has increased the efficiency of the public agency while introducing a level of partnership few vendors will ever match.

The Outlook

Tippecanoe County has capitalized on Sentinel Offender Services for several years now and is very satisfied with the level of reliability and convenience our company offers. Throughout the duration of our involvement with Tippecanoe County, Sentinel Offender Services has complied with all contract rules and regulations. Sentinel Offender Services currently monitors more than 300 adults on active GPS tracking using the TrakMate GPS tracking unit. Tippecanoe County also uses Sentinel Offender Services' CommandTrak Officer Control Units, which are specially programmed wireless devices used in the field to track offender movements and manage offender records. CommandTrak also provides field agents with a method to contact offenders directly in real time, while in the field.

We continue to advance the partnership relationship with Tippecanoe County, Indiana.

**Sentinel Offender Services
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