Alabama Regional Communications System

LEAD AGENCY
Calhoun County, AL EMA

SYSTEM MANAGER
Kevin Jenkins

CORE APPLICATION
CommSHOP 360º

ENHANCEMENT APPLICATIONS
- ID Management
- Mobile Asset Assistant (MAA)
- WebASSET 360º
- WebSERVICE 360º
- WorkFlow Alerts

RESPONSIBILITIES
- Infrastructure Management
- Parts Inventory Management
- Programming and repair of subscriber radios
- Installation, maintenance, and repair of vehicle equipment
- Administrative Duties
- Repair of miscellaneous equipment

Learn more at arcsonline.org

The Alabama Regional Communications System (ARCS) is the State of Alabama's oldest and largest Project 25 interoperable communications system. Originally developed as part of the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP), the ARCS provides mission critical communications services to more than 3,200 users including police, fire, EMS, schools, hospitals, and many other agencies.

MCM Lifecycle 360º Solutions

SITUATION

For nearly 50 years following the end of WWII, the Anniston Army Depot (ANAD) in Anniston, Alabama contained one of the largest stockpiles of chemical weapons anywhere the United States. At its height, the ANAD stored more than 600,000 rockets, bombs, projectiles, land mines, and other chemical weapons. In 1986 however, Congress mandated that all chemical munitions stored at the ANAD (and seven other sites) be destroyed. It was the beginning of what would be a long and potentially hazardous project spanning more than 2 decades. Therefore, a federal funding program was setup to ensure that the communities surrounding the ANAD be as prepared as possible in the event of an emergency. This program was known as the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program, or CSEPP. The Calhoun-Talladega 800 MHz communications system was developed and funded as part of this program. The system went live in 1998 and quickly became the primary means of two-way communications for Public-Safety agencies throughout the four county coverage area.

In September of 2011, 25 years after the project started, all chemical weapons stored that the ANAD were successfully destroyed. This meant that the funding associated with the CSEPP would be coming to an end, including that which funded the Calhoun-Talladega 800 MHz system. Even though the community had become almost completely dependent upon the capabilities of the system, the plug would be pulled unless another way of paying for the project was found.

In preparation for the end of CSEPP grant funding, the Calhoun County and Talladega County Commissions began to explore strategies that would allow for continued service and operation of the existing communications system. With the support of FEMA, elected officials, consulting firms, and the users of the system, an exploratory committee proposed a plan that would allow the users to take ownership of the system. A few months later, a board comprised of officials from both Talladega and Calhoun Counties met and officially took over the system, naming it the Alabama Regional Communications System, or ARCS.

CHALLENGES

With the system now under their control, the ARCS needed to figure out the best way to operate, maintain, and fund a self-sustaining communications operation. They began by tapping Kevin Jenkins to act as System Manager. Right from the start, Mr. Jenkins knew that the tools previously used to manage the system would not allow the ARCS to perform at the level required to succeed. Mr. Jenkins would need to control the operation as a business, and the functionality of the current tools simply wouldn't allow it.

The solution would have to be more than simply a software application. With responsibilities now ranging from asset and work order management to purchasing and external billing, the solution would need to be totally comprehensive; one that could handle every aspect of the operation. At first, it seemed like the only way to handle the new responsibilities would be to combine several different applications, then forge processes allowing them to work together. That was until Mr. Jenkins came across an application that was designed to handle the exact situation he was in. That solution was MCM's CommSHOP 360°.

SOLUTION

As soon as Mr. Jenkins saw a live demo of the CommSHOP 360° application he knew he had found the tool he needed to properly manage the ARCS- a true all-in-one solution designed specifically for communications management. In addition to standard asset management features, CommSHOP 360° would allow the ARCS to track configuration statistics including radio IDs, alias, firmware, flashcode, and code plug versions. It could also manage the day-to-day shop operations of capturing repair history, tracking usage of consumable parts inventory, keeping record of programming & labor efforts, producing internal and external billing reports, and providing statistical analysis of the ARCS operations to ensure efficient management. Software was only part of the overall solution however. What truly set CommSHOP° 360 apart was that it also included a slew of industry-proven processes specifically designed to work in conjuncture with the software. This ensured that not only would Mr. Jenkins have the tools he needed, but also that he would be backed by the same practices and processes that are being utilized by some of the largest and most successful communications shops in the world.

While the software features of the CommSHOP 360° application were in line with the needs Mr. Jenkins presented to MCM, the implementation process would be critical to the success of the overall solution. The implementation process began with the MCM Project Management team coming on site to discuss the day-to-day operations within the ARCS. Everything from Inventory management and purchasing, to work orders and billing was mapped out. Once everything was on the table, the Project Management team then began to formulate the actual processes that would piece together the entire solution. Working closely with Mr. Jenkins, they discussed such processes as how assets would be repaired, how billable work orders and subscribers would be processed, and what data would need to be collected to ensure accurate and complete documentation of an asset's lifecycle.

In addition to the developing and implementing the operational practices and processes, the Project Management team also provided conversion of all existing work order data, individual user training, and turn-key support. This was done to ease the impact of moving to a completely new system, providing as smooth a transition as possible. "The MCM Project Management team took the time to understand how we would need to run our operation", said Jenkins. "After working with them for only a short while, I realized that MCM knew exactly what they were doing, and they were going to do whatever it took to get our operation moving in the right direction."

RESULTS

On April 1, 2012, the ARCS began independently managing the Calhoun-Talladega 800MHz system on behalf of the participating users. Through CommSHOP 360°, the ARCS is able to fully fund itself by collecting fees from users of the "800 MHz" system and, in turn, provides operations, maintenance, and improvement of the communications infrastructure. Today, the system continues to provide nearly 100 percent of the mission-critical and governmental communications needs throughout the four county coverage area. With work orders, inventory, purchasing, asset tracking, and billing all being tracked by a single integrated solution, Kevin Jenkins can look at his system everyday and be sure he is getting the most out of his communications investment.
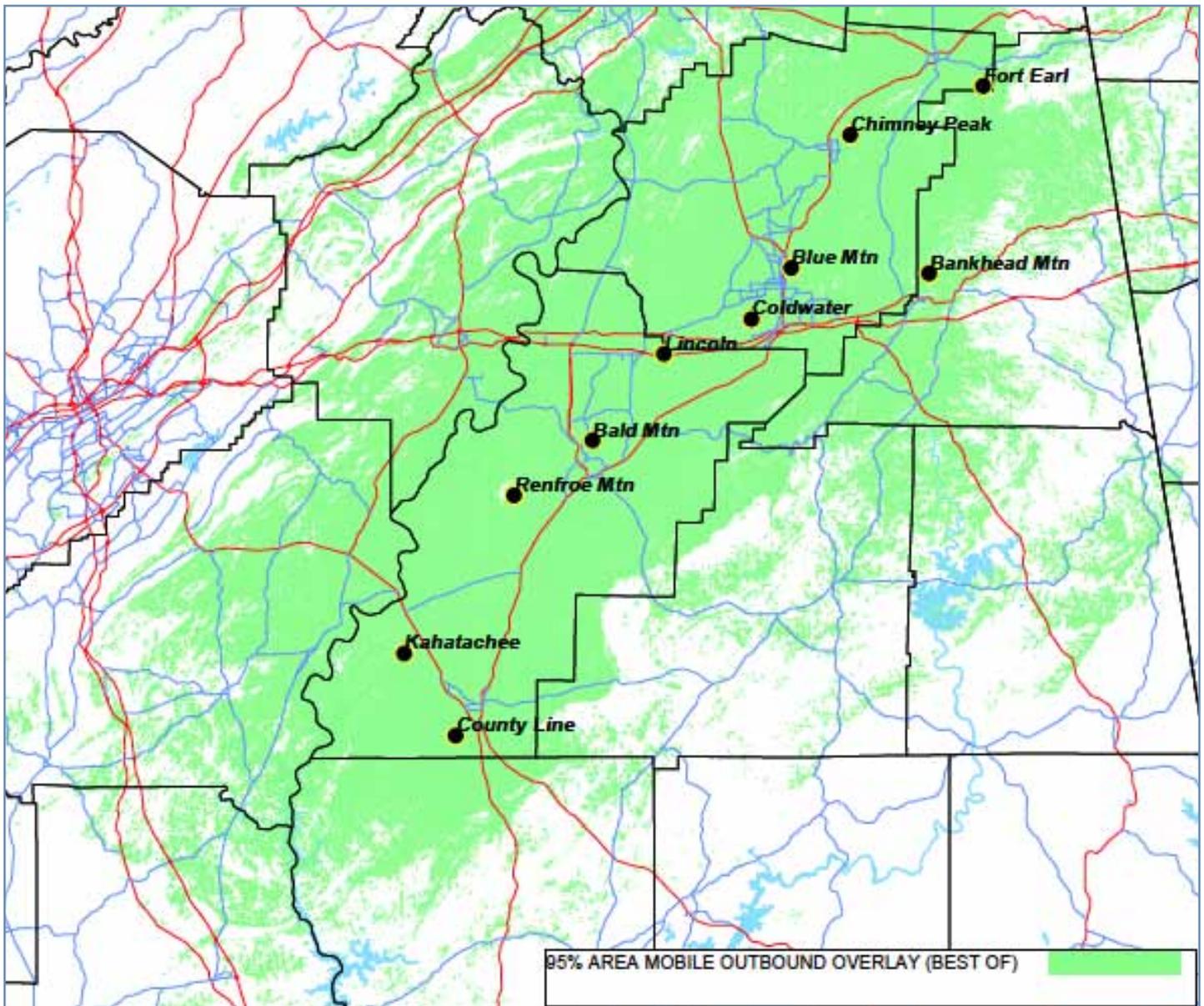
"CommSHOP 360° gives me the operational visibility I need to keep the ARCS running as efficiently as possible at all times, which is a must in today's economy", Jenkins said. In acknowledgment of the success of the implementation, MCM's President and CEO stated, "This implementation is a textbook example of why MCM is in this business. Because of our solutions a community can continue to offer exceptional Public-Safety communications, allowing them to focus on what really matters- the safety and security of their citizens."

About MCM Technology

MCM has been working in the communications industry for more than 20 years. Using this experience, we have developed a suite of applications that are specifically designed to track, manage, and maintain communications assets. By relying on heavily customizable feature sets and proven workflow processes, we guarantee that our solutions can meet the needs of every communications shop we walk into.

ARCS Coverage Area

95% AREA MOBILE OUTBOUND OVERLAY (BEST OF)

Map labels: Fort Earl, Chimney Peak, Blue Mtn, Bankhead Mtn, Coldwater, Lincoln, Bald Mtn, Renfroe Mtn, Kahatachee, County Line

MCM
Lifecycle 360° Solutions

If you would like to learn more about our solutions, or speak to some of our customer references, please contact us at (877) 626-6157 or visit us on the web at www.mcmtechnology.com.