



## Embracing Technology At Super Bowl XXXIX

### Overview

**Country or Region:** United States

**Industry:** Government

### Customer Profile

The Jacksonville, Florida, Sheriff's office was named the lead agency to provide the security for Super Bowl XXXIX.

### Business Situation

Sheriff John Rutherford needed to orchestrate collaboration among an increasing number of jurisdictions and diverse state agencies to plan, build, and execute comprehensive Land, Sea and Air initiatives that encompassed both traditional and non-traditional activities for Super Bowl XXXIX.

### Solution

The Jacksonville, Florida, Sheriff's Department deployed the real-time communication and collaboration portal from Convergence Communications, E-Sponder, based on Microsoft® Office Professional Enterprise Edition 2003 technologies.

### Benefits

- Easily adapts to automate critical processes
- Provides real-time information
- Improves multi-agency collaboration
- Enables situational awareness
- Reduces resolution time for unplanned events

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Beth Horn, Information Technology Officer, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office

When Sheriff Rutherford heard that Jacksonville, Florida had been awarded the Super Bowl host city designation, and that his office was named as lead agency to provide the security for Super Bowl XXXIX, his first response was a feeling of pride. The Super Bowl is one of the most watched sporting events in the world, second only to the Olympics in size and scope. Almost a billion people watch the game on television, and host cities can expect more than a hundred thousands fans and visitors flocking to different venues for a party-filled week prior to the National Football League's championship game.

However, Jacksonville is a football town. It's home to Alltel Stadium and the Jacksonville Jaguars. The stadium hosts the annual NCAA University of Florida vs. University of Georgia and Gator Bowl football games, adding up to more than a dozen football games a year.

But there are other reasons why Jacksonville beat out other contenders to host the event, and that contribute to Sheriff Rutherford's sense of pride in the unusual honor of a local law enforcement agency being asked to plan and execute security for the Super Bowl. Jacksonville consolidated its city and county governments in 1968, leaving the Sheriff's Office to run all the law enforcement functions for both the County of Duval and the City of Jacksonville. With a law enforcement staff of about 1,700 sworn officers and another 685 correctional officers plus 350 civilian employees, the Sheriff's Office presides over 840 square miles that's home to more than 850,000 people.

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**Lieutenant Randy Russell,**

Lead Resource Planner  
for the Jacksonville  
Sheriff's Office

"That means we have no jurisdictional issues between the city and the county," says Sheriff Rutherford. "We also have a great working relationship with surrounding law enforcement agencies, both at the state and federal level, including the regional FBI office."

Located on the Atlantic coast of Florida, Jacksonville already has a highly-developed emergency operations center at the Fire and Rescue headquarters. Here 16 different functional groups, including law enforcement, medical emergency response, fire and rescue, transportation, communications, public health, public works, and the US Coast Guard operate out of the operations center. A similar multi-agency command structure to what had been put together to address natural disasters could also be used to address security and public safety associated with a large sporting event.

### Post 911

Seasoned experience hosting many football games and weathering the storms of nature put the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office in a good position to orchestrate the smooth execution of security for a game the size of the Super Bowl. However, the challenges of managing such a large public event over many days and at many different venues in a post 911 world gave Sheriff Rutherford extra challenges.

"When we were named as the host city for the 34th Super Bowl back in 2000, our concerns for security were really around traffic control and crowd control," he recalls. "Since 911, that's changed. The federal government has mandated new processes and practices like in-synch command. Now we are concerned about terrorist prevention and intervention. The need for higher levels of security requires many more partnerships and an increased presence of federal and national agencies."

Early on, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) began reaching out to different agencies to help provide the security for an anticipated influx of 150,000 visitors to the city. At the end of the day, the

Sheriff's Office worked with 53 different groups, including the FBI, Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security, Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and the DEA. Sheriff Rutherford likens the experience to a Pro Bowl for law enforcement.


"You go to the Pro Bowl and see all these different players out there with different helmets on, all playing for the same team," he says. "When I went to our security meetings I'd see 53 different badges all on the same team, pulling together for the same purpose: to provide a safe and secure Super Bowl experience for everyone in Jacksonville. That includes local fans right on up to two former Presidents and superstar Paul McCartney."

### A Coordinated Effort

Increased security levels require a greater degree of collaboration among an increasing number of jurisdictions. With comprehensive Land, Sea, and Air initiatives that encompassed traditional activities like security check points for pedestrians and traffic control, there were also officers diving the hulls of cruise ships before they entered the harbor and clearing underwater bulkheads at the docks. Constant police patrols cruised the St. John River, which splits the city in half and creates its own unique security issues. Providing security in the air required imposing temporary flight restrictions on game day for a ten mile radius around Alltel Stadium.

Three major security centers acted as focal points for coordinating security at 35 venues for 10 days leading up to and including the game. The Event Operations Center, located downtown in the Fire and Rescue Headquarters Building, was the top-level command post for the Super Bowl event. It was staffed by the Incident Command Team, as well as representatives from all the law enforcement agencies, and from fire and ambulance services. There were also staffs from other regional groups that play a role in public safety and communications: public works, phone and utility companies, public health, and epidemiology to name a few. The JSO Operations Center located in the Veteran's Memorial Arena adjacent to Alltel Stadium was staffed with members of the JSO operations command staff. The Intelligence Operations Center, and Joint Operations Center, were set up at the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) Headquarters and staffed with representatives from intelligence operations including the FBI, FDLE, JSO, and Secret Service. In the event of a terrorist act, the Joint Operations Center would have spun up and become the lead command post. Inside the stadium itself, the NFL security booth provided onsite security and surveillance services.

In addition, a Communications Center that housed 28 dispatchers, responsible for communicating with



officers on the ground was set up in the Police Memorial Building, a few blocks away from the Event Operations Center. A Marine Operations Center was deployed at the Naval Air Station and there were Bomb Management Centers in operation at strategic locations around the city. The New England Patriots and the Philadelphia Eagles stayed at the Renaissance Resort at the World Golf Village and the Marriott at Sawgrass, respectively out in St. Johns County. Here mobile units monitored the teams' practices and comings and goings.

All this required a tremendous cooperative effort between local, state, federal, and military agencies on a scale not seen before in Jacksonville. It quickly became apparent that the interwoven responsibilities of the different agencies required an unprecedented level of collaboration and communication. Initially, this posed a significant challenge for the Sheriff's office.

### The Need for Information Sharing

Lieutenant Randy Russell, an 18-year veteran of the force at Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, acted as the lead resource planner for the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. As such, he was involved in the credentialing and staffing of more than 4,000 assignments that participated in the event under the auspices of the 53 different partners working with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. Early on, he realized that traditional methods of planning and communication would not be sufficient.

"The Sheriff's Office began actively planning for the Super Bowl 18 months ahead of the game. We work under the Incident Command System (ICS) that requires the coordinated development of Incident Action Plans (IAP) that outline a chronological set of events that are supposed to happen at every venue and at every assignment for all Land, Sea and Air initiatives," he explains. "We were creating these plans on paper, building up stacks of binders. We held countless face-to-face meetings. We e-mailed, phoned, and faxed. But this just wasn't an efficient way of coordinating IAPs for so many different groups. We were all working towards the same end, yet none of us had the big picture. We needed a way to share information and see the evolution of the operation as a whole."

At the same time, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office Information Technology Officer Beth Horn had similar concerns about communications during the event. "The Super Bowl presented us with a totally new set of parameters. We knew in advance that the 53 different agencies would be communicating with each other, and that the dispatchers would be communicating with the officers on the ground," she recalls. "Regular radio communications are fine within an agency's frequency, but don't allow for cross-agency communications. And the dispatchers

that receive the 911 calls and communicate with officers on the street did not have a way to talk with their counterparts or the Command Staff to give situational awareness."

Sheriff Rutherford agrees. "It was impossible to see everything going on from the Command Center. In the past, if we needed more information about an incident on the ground, we used golf carts to venture out into the crowds. Sometimes we needed to communicate with a specific officer and he was standing in the middle of the road directing traffic with his radio turned down. In that case we would have to send somebody out. We simply couldn't be everywhere at the same time."

### Finding a Solution

However when Horn heard about a real-time communications solution that was used to manage security when President George Bush and Senator John Kerry met for the second presidential debate at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri she decided to investigate. The web-based solution, called E-Sponder, was created by Convergence Communications and runs on the Microsoft Office System platform. It uses Microsoft Office 2003 SharePoint Portal Server to facilitate online collaboration so that credentialed agencies can exchange information and communicate with each other in real time through a simple Web browser. The system is designed so that any information that's entered by a user is instantly available for anyone else on the system. And once the data is entered, it's archived for comprehensive after-action review.

After attending an E-Sponder demo, Horn was impressed by its flexibility and ease of use. "I was looking for a tool that would augment what we were already doing from a communications standpoint," she says. "We had already implemented SharePoint Portal Server and had an external SharePoint site up and running for another state-wide project. Our law enforcement officers already use laptops in their cruisers, which are equipped with wireless modems, to communicate with dispatch. I didn't want a complex solution that would require lots of training. E-Sponder used familiar Microsoft Office software and could be customized quickly to meet our needs."

It didn't take long for senior officers at the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office to buy into the solution and by January 2005, Convergence Communications was busy configuring the system to meet the standards of the National Incident Management System model and accommodate the special needs of the Super Bowl's designated lead security agency.

"We deployed the E-Sponder system external to our firewall, but installed another firewall in front of it so that the solution was exposed to the Internet, but only for those agencies with credentialed access to

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Sheriff, Jacksonville,  
Florida

the system," says Horn. "Behind that firewall, we had three Microsoft Windows Server 2003 servers running Microsoft Office SharePoint Portal Server 2003, Exchange Server 2003, Live Communications Server for instant messaging, and Active Directory directory services that communicated with the two other servers on user account information. It was up and running in a couple of weeks."

It only took two announcements on consecutive Friday planning meetings at the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office to elicit an enthusiastic response from participating agencies. Online registration utilizing a customized process built by Convergence was quick and easy, and by the time the Sheriff's Office had finished ratifying applicants' credentials the number of authenticated participants on the system reached 650.

"To me, ease of use is a major benefit of the E-Sponder system," says Horn. "I never imagined we'd get 650 users up and running on a new solution in just a few weeks."

### Security Planning Made Easy

According to Lieutenant Russell, E-Sponder's Microsoft Office-based technology made it easy to incorporate the solution into the planning process, leading to huge productivity increases.

"Convergence created an electronic form using Microsoft Office InfoPath 2003 that replicates the IAP forms our officers are used to filling out. Only now they entered the information directly into the system, and all the other agencies could see what we were planning," he explains. "As more and more IAP plans were entered from participating agencies, the system built up a complete timeline of pre-planned events, providing a global view to the planning process that put everybody on the same page and saved significant time."

Sharing and comparing security plans prior to the event helped to pinpoint potential conflicts early on. For example, the NFL Experience IAP called for road closures on the South Bank of the St. John's River, and the IAP for an event held at the River City Brewery called for another road closure that would have effectively blocked both exits from the I 95. Luckily, this traffic headache was averted.

At the end of the day, more than 6,000 pre-planned events were logged into the system. In just over a month since going live, 650 E-Sponder participants from 53 agencies covering a geographic area that reached as far as Washington DC, and representing more than 4,000 personnel, all knew exactly what they and everyone else had to do to ensure a safe experience for everybody at Super Bowl XXXIX.

### 100 Percent Situational Awareness

And for the first time, commanding officers like Sheriff Rutherford could watch and evaluate the execution of these pre-planned events from their desktop computers. The system is designed to show the status of each event as pending, completed, or overdue.

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Nowhere was this more evident than in the way the solution handled the over 500 unplanned events that occurred during the festivities. As soon as an officer on the ground radioed in an unplanned incident, for example a car accident blocking traffic, the dispatcher would enter it into E-Sponder where the information became instantly available for everyone else on the system to view. Staffs in all Command Centers could immediately begin collaborating on an effective response to the situation as it unfolded, following its resolution in real time.

"Not only can we see what's going on a superficial level, but we can drill into incidents to get the details," says Sheriff Rutherford. "I monitored an unplanned event where a suspicious bag was being investigated, and I was able to find out not only the names of the two officers that responded, but which dog assigned as well. And I never had to leave the Command Center."

### Embracing Technology

Comparing the Super Bowl experience to managing security at previous events, Lieutenant Russell likens this level of situational awareness to the difference between listening to a radio drama and imagining the scenes versus watching a live TV broadcast while running a ticker that shows all relevant background information.

"What's exciting to me as a veteran law enforcement officer is to see the police, fire, and emergency medical services, as well as the public safety community beginning to embrace technology as a way to make the public safer," he says. "It's gratifying to see the law enforcement community following leaders in the business community and emulating their use of technology. There's been a serious cross over of information between these two communities and I believe we are on the edge of a paradigm shift with technology taking a leading role in the advancement of law enforcement. Right now in Jacksonville we are experiencing the leading edge of a whole new approach to security management. It's an exciting time to be in public safety."

**E-Sponder**  
a highly customizable software solution that enables federal, state, local, and private sector entities to exchange information necessary for daily activities, to plan events, to coordinate command and control during events and incidents, and to review and evaluate performance during After-Action Reviews.

For more information about E-Sponder, go to: [www.e-sponder.com](http://www.e-sponder.com)

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