

SEE WHAT THEY SEE, WHEN THEY SEE IT, WITH L-3 MOBILE VISION'S PATROLSOUT®

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Since the advent of in-car video systems, one central problem has always been present:

while it's true that the cameras can provide valuable information, they were limited to looking at events after the fact, oftentimes much later on when a supervisor retrieved from an officer's patrol vehicle the physical media on which the video was stored.

This technology has helped to clear officers of wrongdoing and to find the perpetrator in those tragic cases when an officer is down, but until recently it simply hasn't been possible to look, in real time, at what that dash cam is seeing in order to help before tragedy occurs.

I recently had the opportunity to demo a solution which makes that, and a lot more, possible: L-3 Mobile Vision's PatrolScout® software. Designed as an add-on to their industry-leading Flashback in-car camera system, PatrolScout brings an entirely new set of possibilities to the day-to-day operations of public safety by allowing a dispatcher or supervisor (even one out in the field) to instantly view a live feed of what's going on at a scene prior to the arrival of additional units, while simultaneously providing an exact physical location for units overlaid onto a detailed map.

SHOW AND TELL

For those of us who have been working in public safety for a while now, the advantages of this are pretty clear for both the administrative side of things and, more critically, for officer safety and for efficient response to critical incidents.

As we all know, sometimes the information we get from our dispatchers may not be accurate through no fault of their own: either the caller hasn't given a clear picture of what's going on or where, the circumstances may have changed between the call and our arrival, or the caller may simply have not had all the information needed.

When we do get to the scene, the term "fluid and dynamic" has often been used to describe any call we handle; I've personally seen EDP calls, for example, turn from mild into life-threatening in the blink of an eye. What PatrolScout enables is a much broader capability to communicate from the scene to dispatchers, supervisors, and fellow responding officers what exactly is going on.

Traditionally we've done this by radio, but let's face it: that's often very limited, either because we're trying to describe what's going on at the same time as we're dealing with it, we can't talk because of the severity of the situation, or there simply isn't enough time to communicate all of the pertinent details.

With PatrolScout, the ability to pull up a live feed over your agency's existing mobile data infrastructure (such as the cell network which you're currently using to send data to your MDTs, for example) provides a far broader overview of any given situation without the need to interrupt the actual response to transmit information about it. This can be achieved either through the officer pressing a "Watch Me" alert button on the PatrolScout interface, which pops up a notification on the dispatcher/supervisor's screen and starts transmitting, or on-demand through any enabled Web browser logged into the PatrolScout service.

LIVE FEED SCENARIOS

So, what are the practical scenarios for this? Just about anything you can think of. For our more day-to-day operations, we can conduct a spot check of officers on scene at a traffic stop to ensure that they're still OK, even if they're out of the car and have forgotten to turn on their portable (we've all done it). Dispatchers and supervisors can get a view into a disorderly conduct call to determine if more units will be required, or see how bad an MVC is to determine what medical resources might be needed and inform the fire department's response. Command staff can get a sense of where their resources are deployed – especially since the PatrolScout software allows units to be organized and displayed in logical patrol groups – and determine whether an area needs additional coverage, as well as ensure accountability for personnel.

Finally, in those scenarios in which we are faced with a critical response, either due to a large-scale or high-impact incident or because an officer has been assaulted or is down, having the ability to view what's going on, as it happens, from multiple angles as different patrol units converge upon a scene is invaluable simply because visual information conveys far more, and more rapidly, than a radio transmission ever could.

When those incidents happen – and they do happen – the ability to efficiently assess is often the key to whether we can effectively respond. Seeing and reporting has always been the gold standard, and the ability to now do that from afar, and from multiple perspectives, can only enhance our ability to protect our communities while keeping our personnel as safe as possible. L-3 Mobile Vision's PatrolScout makes that possible, in a user-friendly interface with very little learning curve, and will bring the eyes of the officer to those who need to see it most, when it's most critical that they do so.

