

# CASE STUDY

## South Carolina National Guard



### Fortress Enables Secure "On-the-Move" Communications for Emergency Response Situations

It is well documented that the current communications infrastructure is not always available during major disasters - both natural and man-made. As an emergency response agency, the South Carolina National Guard (SCNG) must remain connected in times of civil unrest in order to provide the most reliable service to the citizen. The SCNG requires local wireless connectivity in armory and training site locations to support mobilization, administration, training and Defense Support to Civilian Authorities (DSCA) during disaster relief operations.

"In South Carolina, we have the National Guard Task Force's Mobile Response Teams (MRTs) who are responsible for responding to any emergency," said COL Debra Rose, J-6, SCNG. "In order for the MRTs to be successful in responding to a situation, they must be able to communicate 'on-the-move.' As such, we required a secure wireless solution that supports fixed armory operations relevant to training, administration, and disaster response."

Efforts to plan, engineer, install, and implement secure wireless connectivity that provides the ability to immediately establish network communications in areas where traditional infrastructure does not exist is a challenging undertaking. The SCNG had to determine the most effective approach to enable this capability state-wide, which encapsulates roughly 31,000 square miles.

In addition, the SCNG had to ensure that the wireless solution was interoperable with the MRTs and a number of response organizations from federal, state, and local government. This was required to enable wireless voice, video, and data interactions between agencies, as well as first responders at an incident site and coordinating locations - such as emergency operations or triage centers.

"When a disaster such as a hurricane occurs - which is unfortunately a fact of life in South Carolina - many different organizations are on the scene," said COL Rose. "In the past, it was extremely difficult for MRTs to efficiently communicate with other emergency response personnel, which obviously hindered the entire process."

The SCNG implemented a secure wireless solution that incorporated Fortress Technologies' ES520 Secure Wireless Bridges. An all-in-one network access device with built-in security, Fortress Secure Wireless Bridges are ideally suited to work as a self-contained network combining the functions of a wireless access point, Ethernet switch, and security gateway in a form factor engineered specifically for harsh environments.

Fortress Secure Wireless Bridges were installed at armories across South Carolina, enabling MRTs to connect to the Bridge for voice, video, and data capabilities during emergency response or disaster recovery situations. The project allows all responding units to use wireless communications - while in the vicinity of a wireless equipped armory - in a completely secure environment.

#### Bringing secure wireless connectivity anywhere

The Fortress ES520 Secure Wireless Bridge allows organizations to quickly establish networking and communications in environments with no available infrastructure. With a dual radio design that allows for simultaneous wireless backhaul and wireless access, the ES520 offers high assurance FIPS 140-2 validated security as well as industry leading radio range. Combining these services along with an eight port Ethernet switch in a small and rugged form factor enables the ES520 to provide on-demand secure voice, video and data communications.

#### Challenges

- Enable secure "on-the-move" voice, video and data communications during emergency response
- Accommodate a mix of network equipment and applications
- Provide transparent operation for users
- Meet DoD policy

#### Solution

- Fortress ES520 Secure Wireless Bridges
- Voice-over-Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephone system
- Video conferencing systems
- Interoperable handheld radios

#### Results

- Faster, more effective communications for emergency response
- All applications are supported
- Transparent operation for users
- Solution meets DoD policy



For more information about Fortress:  
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