



Customer Stories:

Choctaw County Ambulance Authority



Choctaw County Ambulance Authority transforms operations

- **Business needs** – The new director of an emergency medical transport agency wanted to operate more efficiently.
- **Networking solution** – An array of solutions including AT&T Office@Hand, AT&T Dedicated Internet Service, and AT&T Professional Services transformed the ambulance authority's networks.
- **Business value** – Productivity, efficiency, and better communication
- **Industry focus** – Medical transport
- **Size** – 744 square mile coverage area

About Choctaw County Ambulance Authority

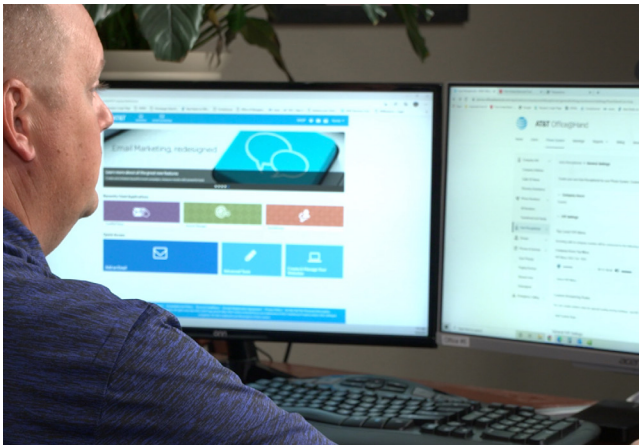
Choctaw County Ambulance Authority, located in Hugo, OK, provides emergency and non-emergency medical transport services for a large district. The Oklahoma 522 EMS District agency conveys patients to hospitals, medical centers, and health care facilities in Hugo and surrounding communities and facilitates transfers between medical facilities.

The situation

Unreliable phone service and inadequate internet connectivity hampered the organization's operations. The Choctaw County Ambulance Authority required a network upgrade to support its important work for the citizens it serves.

Solution

AT&T Office@Hand gives Choctaw County Ambulance Authority voice, fax, text messaging, conferencing, and collaboration capabilities that make it easier to operate. AT&T Professional Services managed the Office@Hand deployment, simplifying the transition, and helping the ambulance authority make the most of its new services. The organization also chose AT&T Dedicated Internet Service to help improve billing, administration, and communication. Together the solutions are helping Choctaw County Ambulance Authority increase efficiency and enhance its ability to perform its potentially lifesaving services.



Emergency transport in Circus City

Choctaw County Ambulance Authority was formed in 1978 to offer emergency services to the residents of Choctaw County in southeast Oklahoma along the Texas border. It has 22 full-time employees, including EMTs and office staff, and usually answers about 3,000 calls every year. That number has increased during COVID-19 when ambulances have facilitated many long-distance patient transfers.

The authority's five ambulances cover 774 square miles to serve the county's 15,000 residents. "We have a lot of area to cover, and our people do a really good job. And we have a great community," said Randy Springfield, executive administrative director of Choctaw County Ambulance Authority.

Choctaw County enjoys an unusual distinction – the area has come to be known as Circus City, USA. Several circus troupes and their exotic animals spend every winter in the county, which has opened both an elephant sanctuary and a tiger preserve to care for retired circus animals. "It's nice driving by and seeing those elephants playing together," Springfield said. "The animals have a good life, and they boost tourism because people come here to see them."

The county is also home to Showmen's Rest, a cemetery for circus performers and rodeo riders. "So Choctaw County is kind of a rodeo-circus family," he said.

Phones to keep up with 911 calls

Springfield has worked in healthcare direct service and administration for most of his career. He holds a Master's Degree in Business Administration and is within a year of finishing a Doctorate in Healthcare Administration. He was working as a state health inspector when the Choctaw County Commission recruited him to revamp its Ambulance Authority.

The organization was run inefficiently, he said, and was on the brink of being taken over by a city government. "The commissioners did not want that, so they asked me to step in," he said. While initially hesitant to leave a good job with the state, he believed he could help bring about improvements

that would benefit Choctaw County residents. “That calling was there. I love healthcare,” he said.

As he settled into his new job, Springfield noted several major operational problems, including an aging copper line phone system. It was unreliable, and every time it rained callers heard mostly static. “We were missing calls, which is not good for an agency,” he said.

The critical nature of some calls made a new phone system a priority since the authority handles 911 emergency transport calls that the county sheriff’s office routes to them. “We do our own dispatching, so we had to have a phone system to be able to keep up with 911 calls.”

“Your life is our mission”

Inadequate internet service also hampered ambulance authority staff. The one small hotspot that provided office connectivity was unable to keep up with employee demand, and Springfield’s 22 staff members shared a single email account for billing.

While most organizations have moved to electronic record-keeping, the ambulance authority still used paper for everything. “Reports weren’t being done properly. Billing was slow. Nothing was fast-tracked,” he said. “We needed to go completely digital.”

Springfield began by rebranding the Choctaw County Ambulance Authority. “We got together and came up with ‘Your life is our mission,’ and that was the foundation,” he said. “Our whole drive is to make sure that we could help the people that need us.”

This required looking and being more professional, he said. “And to do that we had to have professional equipment. I wanted to revolutionize and bring us up to date. And so I started looking into AT&T.”

No room for error

AT&T representatives recommended AT&T Office@Hand, a flexible cloud-based solution that delivers a suite of voice, fax, text messaging, conferencing, and collaboration applications to help ambulance authority workers be more productive, and AT&T Dedicated Internet Service, which delivers highly secure connectivity.

AT&T Office@Hand directs calls to the person who can best help each caller. “Our callers hear a prompt that thanks them for calling and gives them a directory, so they don’t have to be transferred to 14 people just to get an answer for one question,” Springfield said. “That has been a great benefit to me, because now when I get a phone call, it’s someone who needs to talk to me, not someone who needs Billing or HR.”



Springfield and his colleagues like having the ability to select custom ringtones. “In the past a phone would ring and if you weren’t in your office, you couldn’t tell if was your phone that was ringing,” he said. With custom ringtones staff always know who every call is meant for.



Choctaw County Ambulance Authority used AT&T Professional Services to deploy Office@Hand. “I wanted the professional installation because our agency has no room for error. We wanted to ensure that everything was set up the way we wanted, with no faults and no downtime,” he said. “We couldn’t afford to miss a 911 call.”

“Our AT&T Dedicated Internet Service has been our lifeline to the outside world.”

Randy Springfield

Executive Administrative Director of Choctaw County Ambulance Authority

Upgrading to electronic health records

Adding AT&T Dedicated Internet Service has also benefited Choctaw County Ambulance Authority, Springfield said, especially as COVID-19 descended on the county. “At the onset I couldn’t get masks, gowns or gloves. Thank goodness we had the internet so we could search different vendors,” he said. “Our AT&T

Dedicated Internet Service has been our lifeline to the outside world.”

The speed and reliability of the service enabled the county to make the leap from paper-based forms to digital health records. “We went to 100 percent electronic medical records for billing and documentation of our ambulance runs,” he said.

It also facilitates electronic banking, which saves Springfield time every day. “I have a check scanner on my desk that we use to make daily deposits without ever going to the bank, which is great,” he said. “I absolutely love this internet service. It’s really fast and it’s working well for us.”

Finally, AT&T Dedicated Internet enabled the authority to provide all employees with individual email accounts, and to set up function-based accounts. As a result, Springfield said, “Things are no longer getting lost.”

Peace of mind for patients

Upgrading the Choctaw County Ambulance Authority’s networks has helped Springfield boost its standing in

the community. “I have a really good team and a good board that supported my decisions,” he said. “I was able to convince them that we had to spend money to make money.”

The agency has enhanced revenues by introducing a membership program. People pay an annual fee that frees them from having to pay for ambulance services that are not totally covered by insurance. Program members no longer receive bills from the ambulance authority. “Whatever insurance pays, that’s all we take,” Springfield said.

In addition to generating income for the ambulance authority, the program enables people to use the ambulance service when they need it without worrying about the cost.

Exceeded expectations

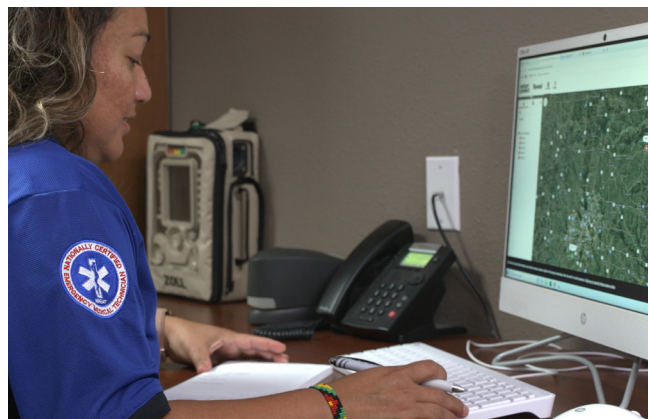
Springfield credits AT&T with helping to transform Choctaw County Ambulance Authority networks and operations. “Since 2019, we have updated our fleet and I’ve written almost a million dollars’ worth of grants,” Springfield said. “We have completely revamped and gone completely digital. That’s why I teamed up with AT&T.”

He appreciates the relationship with an AT&T account team that looks out for his agency. “Having that one-on-one communication with somebody that actually sees the importance of our agency and our mission is good,” he said. “When I needed help, they were there. They listen to our needs. And they have met and exceeded our expectations.”

The success of Choctaw County’s deployment has led to calls from other agency directors asking for Springfield’s advice. He doesn’t hesitate to recommend AT&T. “I tell them it will best fit their community’s needs.”

If there’s ever a problem, AT&T immediately handles the trouble ticket, he said. “I also tell them how easy it is to customize different aspects of the operations, which has been really beneficial to us.”

And he always recommends AT&T over local carriers. He recently heard from a city manager who was deciding whether to use AT&T Office@Hand or service from a local company. “I told him, don’t even look at the local companies,” he said. “Office@Hand is probably one of the best products I’ve ever worked with.”



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