Instant Connect

Mobile Command Center

The City of Sikeston's Mobile Command Center is a rugged, versatile command-and-control vehicle with a singular mission – to help the City's Department of Public Safety and other first responders serve the public and keep Missourians safe. It's a roving communications center that acts as a statewide resource, keeping public safety personnel connected and communicating as they respond to events, support regional activities, and work to save lives.

AT THE HEART OF THE MISSION:
The Instant Connect Enterprise™ push-to-talk communications platform.

Instant Connect links radio, mobile, IP, and telephone users in a single, seamless push-to-talk (PTT) communications environment fully controlled from inside the truck. Instant Connect helps empower the City of Sikeston and other Missouri agencies to do what they do best – serve the public.

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> "The Mobile Command Center is an essential on-site asset when responding to evolving situations."
>
> Ryan Smith, Captain, Department of Public Safety, City of Sikeston

Achieving the mission with "any device" communications.

The City of Sikeston Department of Public Safety affirmatively promotes, preserves, and delivers security, safety, and quality services for its community. All officers are cross-trained in both law enforcement and fire with the underlying principles of integrity, compassion, and fairness. The department is especially proud of its incident response capabilities utilizing the Mobile Command Center with Instant Connect.

"The Mobile Command Center is an essential on-site asset when responding to evolving situations," says Ryan Smith, Captain, Department of Public Safety. "The ability to integrate radio, mobile, and IP communications from a unified command center has made the difference, time and time again, in the speed and efficacy of our service. Air-to-ground radio, police bands, fire, EMS, mobile – anyone who needs to connect can be added to the environment. We call it, 'any device' communications."

What makes the vehicle particularly valuable is its broad regional use. Owned and managed by the City since 2008, the truck is, in fact, a statewide resource. There is a second "sister" vehicle managed by the Missouri Highway Patrol. Together, these roving command centers provide coverage across the state. Both are funded by a combination of Homeland Security, state, and local monies.

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"Local dispatchers are always surprised at how easy the software is. They expect a big learning curve, but literally within minutes they're off and running."

Sam Villagrana, IT Systems Administrator, City of Sikeston

Flexible, easy-to-use communications – the key to rapid response.

"Once the Mobile Command Center is called into action, things can move fast. We arrive on-site and quickly get the truck up and running, deploying antennas and then configuring the communications to handle whatever the situation requires," explains Ryan.

Speed is key since in many instances, the vehicle is requested and utilized by other Missourian agencies who need it for local command-and-control. There's no time to waste. The Instant Connect software must be immediately utilized by new operators in the field who may never have seen it before.

"Instant Connect's flexibility and ease-of-use are core to its effectiveness," says Sam Villagrana, IT Systems Administrator. "Often within 5-10 minutes of introducing the local dispatcher from a different agency to the desktop app, he or she is managing communications channels that can connect radio users to mobile and IP users in the field or anywhere they may be. No learning curve required. The operators just sit down, set up, and go."

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> "Thanks to Instant Connect, we can respond to unfolding events with information and coordination that make the difference."
>
> Ryan Smith, Captain, Department of Public Safety, City of Sikeston

The bottom line – helping save lives.

The Instant Connect software collapses all communications devices onto the IP network, allowing seamless push-to-talk that can be the difference between life and death in the field.

 "A mobile command center can dramatically improve the effectiveness of incident response," says Ryan. He points to a recent missing-persons incident where the agency that had jurisdiction requested the Mobile Command Center after an initial search did not locate the individual. The vehicle arrived and local dispatchers quickly configured the communications channels to provide centralized command-and-control. The agency was able to execute a broader, more coordinated search mission utilizing multiple channels to keep all field personnel in contact. The missing person was found within 2 hours of Instant Connect being put into action.

 The Mobile Command Center is also used to support scheduled events, such as the legendary Sikeston Jaycee Bootheel Rodeo, which may have as many as 10,000 attendees a night. While the COVID-19 pandemic may prevent this scale of event in the foreseeable future, if and when the organizers are ready, the Mobile Command Center will be there again. "We typically deploy for a full week as the rodeo's dedicated dispatch center," says Ryan. "We use Instant Connect to manage three core channels combining radio and mobile – law enforcement (ground), law enforcement (vehicular traffic), and medical services."

INSIDE THE COMMAND CENTER

- There are typically two operators inside the truck, working two Instant Connect command consoles to share the workload.

- Operators typically manage 8-10 communications channels connecting radio with mobile and IP users in the field and in regional offices.

- The vehicle is largely self-managing; it can operate on-site for weeks with as few as 2 personnel per shift.

- Remote City of Sikeston staff can easily connect with the truck using PTT on their mobile phones, offering support as needed.

Performance and reliability the City can count on.

The City of Sikeston's commitment to Instant Connect as their preferred mobile command communications solution offers a number of key advantages.

Continuing the Cisco legacy.
The Mobile Command Center already deployed advanced Cisco communications infrastructure and Cisco IP phones inside the truck, so Instant Connect software, which was originally engineered by Cisco, was an easy fit. Cisco is highly regarded by the City for its proven performance.

Smart use of public dollars.
Instant Connect has been rock-solid and maintenance-free. "We've never had a reliability issue with the software," says Ryan. "It just runs and runs. Which makes it a pretty smart use of public dollars."

Customer service. "As great as the solution is, the speed and responsiveness of Instant Connect customer service is even better," says Sam. He points to a recent upgrade that went very smoothly. "When it comes to enterprise IT, upgrades can sometimes be tricky. But the Instant Connect team executed it seamlessly."

Friendly, easy-to-use. "To have a new operator from a neighboring jurisdiction walk into the truck, sit at a console with software they've never seen before, and then be up-and-running managing communications within 5-10 minutes – that's exceptional," says Ryan.

"When it's a life safety issue, every minute can count."

Ryan Smith, Captain, Department of Public Safety, City of Sikeston
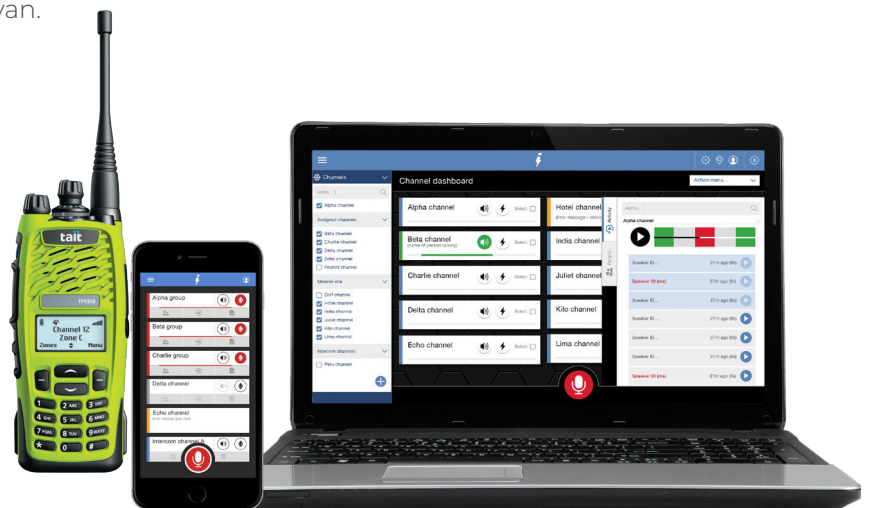
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