

Prominent U.S. Police Department Redefines Collaboration Through Video



Suffolk County Police Department installs Cisco® video-conferencing capabilities to support officers and ensure public safety.

Executive Summary

Suffolk County Police Department

- **Industry:** State and local government
- **Location:** Suffolk County, New York
- **Number of Officers:** Approximately 2400

CHALLENGE

- Need to streamline communication across entire department
- Need to improve officer training program efficiency
- Desire to integrate advanced technology solutions for enhanced civilian protection

SOLUTION

- Installed communications platforms to support more efficient workflow
- Example: Updated network foundation to support new services

RESULTS

- Improved department efficiency by simplifying communication processes between officers and precincts
- Significantly reduced officer and trainer travel cost and time by providing department with virtual training capabilities
- Improved public safety by supplying officers with tools to respond to emergencies quickly and more prepared

Challenge

The Suffolk County Police Department (SCPD), located in the State of New York, is one of the largest police departments in the United States. With approximately 2400 active officers that patrol more than 900 square miles, SCPD is responsible for protecting nearly 1.5 million people every day. Due to the department's large scale and reach, SCPD leadership has sought solutions to train its officers and manage all of its operations in a more efficient manner. To communicate important information to all seven precincts effectively, training officers would have to present the same information multiple times to ensure that it was received and understood—an overall time-consuming process.

SCPD traditionally conducted training a variety of ways. There would be instruction at a centralized location, monthly inspections, roll call, and training videos that were viewed during an officer's administrative time. Most commonly, officers would have to travel to the police academy for mandatory trainings. This arrangement meant that officers were pulled away from their usual duties and had to transport themselves to the central location, which was up to a 45-minute drive for some. For any additional training the department wanted to do in the precincts, it had to send trainers out to each area multiple times to offer sessions that worked with everyone's schedules and shifts. In fact, the department was sending its trainers out on average 35 times per training program, each lasting 6 months. This method of training proved inefficient and costly.

SCPD began to explore options that would ensure both all-force communications and training were offered in a way that was efficient and effective for both officers and the department. SCPD leadership decided on a solution that would modernize infrastructure and operations to reflect the growth of the county and the responsibilities of the department.

Solution

As SCPD began its search for a technology solution, it knew that it needed a platform that would enable quick and effective communication with its officers in the field, as well as improve its training program's efficiency. Keeping in mind that one of the biggest elements of police communication and training is face-to-face interaction, SCPD prioritized finding a solution that would allow officers to provide instant feedback on specific cues, movements, and facial expressions that are critical in responding to emergencies. Therefore, SCPD determined that a lifelike video platform would be the ideal solution because it has the potential to provide the same benefits as face-to-face communication, but without the travel.

In 2014, SCPD researched, tested and implemented pilot programs for various video platforms. One was the Cisco TelePresence® solution. After an entire year, the department selected the Cisco video-conferencing solution, because it is both high quality and easy to use—something that was crucial to officers who, in the middle of an emergency, don't have time to troubleshoot technical failures. To complement this option, Cisco offered SCPD a multiphase rollout to its video capabilities so that the department can evolve over the next several years and officers can easily become familiar with the technology.

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The first phase focused on establishing the technology in the department's infrastructure, which SCPD dubbed VIPER—Video Interactive Police Education Resource. SCPD procured Cisco TelePresence SX80 Codec units with the associated software and feature sets, as well as Cisco Business Edition 6000 on Cisco Unified Communications servers to enable the police department to have full control of a comprehensive set of tools and features available to customize their deployment. The department put large-scale monitors in its headquarters and installed two 70-inch high-definition (HD) screens in each precinct to enable instantaneous visual communication and collaboration.



SCPD also included customized audio sound bars from a Cisco partner to offer high-quality sound for each of the seven precinct deployments. Two additional units were deployed at police headquarters in Yaphank and the police academy in Brentwood, Long Island.

Phase two of SCPD's video solution will involve expanding the program beyond the department itself. It will increase recording capabilities to provide the ability to play back missed trainings or to create on-demand trainings officers can access any time. SCPD plans on spreading its video capability to its mobile command post in this second phase so that it can stream video from mobile locations, such as the squad cars, back to headquarters.

Results

VIPER has been a huge success for SCPD. The VIPER program helps to improve the administration of the Suffolk County police force by using innovative video conferencing throughout the 900-plus square miles of the county. VIPER reduces administrative costs for travel between precincts and headquarters, and allows all officers to be trained in a time-effective manner. Communications across the entire force have improved so that officers can operate more efficiently and strategically.

Department leadership has received positive feedback from officers, particularly about the large-scale monitors in each precinct. The solution has enabled timelier and more consistent communications with officers not only with each other in each precinct but also with personnel throughout the county as well. Oftentimes, the information that leadership needs to convey from headquarters to precincts is time sensitive and mission critical. The new system ensures information is delivered clearly and quickly for the problem to be addressed. Having all communications and training originate from one source has helped avoid confusion and miscommunication among SCPD officers, ultimately allowing the entire police force to operate as a more cohesive unit.

In terms of training, the department has seen both cost and time savings. While SCPD still does send trainers in person to precincts, Cisco TelePresence technology has drastically reduced the amount of times the trainer is in the field. Now the department sends a trainer into the field only four or five times per program—a huge source of cost savings for the department. Additionally, the courses that previously ran for 6 months are taking about 2 weeks to complete.

Cisco TelePresence Solution on 70-Inch HD Displays in Suffolk County Police Department Precinct Locations
(Credit: Suffolk County Police Department)

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Product List

VIDEO

- Cisco TelePresence SX80 Codec

COLLABORATION

- Cisco Business Edition 6000
- Cisco Unified Communications Manager

Thanks to its new virtual communication tool, police officers that were previously occupied or away from their stations are now onsite, equipped and prepared for any situation. Also, the department and its trainers are saving significant amounts of time and money by streamlining processes. Overall, the increased training and improved communications that VIPER has facilitated means that SCPD has enhanced its training—and Suffolk County citizens are reaping the benefits.

Next Steps

While phase one of SCPD's video solution has been rolled out and is completely operational, phase two will add even more functionality to the department. SCPD will be able to reach outside its own precincts and externally communicate to any department or resource it would like to bring into their video network, such as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security or the district attorney's office. This integrated level of communication further defines SCPD's role in national public safety and will provide Suffolk County residents with an even higher level of protection and support.

SCPD is also looking at smaller desktop units such as the Cisco DX70 and DX80 to be placed with its commanders and high-ranking officials in the department, so they can instantaneously communicate with each other with video. Additionally, SCPD is interested in spreading live video feeds from its video-conferencing system to its mobile command posts and even helicopters.

Eventually, SCPD would like to see the video-conferencing technology implemented at five east-end town agencies to help them operate in a more interconnected manner. It also wants to expand the technology to the county's Office of Emergency Management to more easily share information during an incident.

For More Information

For more information about the Cisco TelePresence solution, visit <http://www.cisco.com/go/video>.