

E-911 Emergency Services in Bamberg County, S.C. — Case Study



BAMBERG COUNTY E-911 TURNS TO FRONTIER FOR FUTURE-READY PHONE SYSTEM AND ONGOING SUPPORT

Bamberg County covers 395 square miles of rural area in southwestern South Carolina and has a population of about 16,000. Its E-911 Emergency Services department is located in the city of Bamberg and serves as the primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for Bamberg County. Services are provided for the Bamberg County Sheriffs Office, four municipal police agencies, nine fire departments and the Bamberg Rescue Squad, Inc.

Sharon Hammond is Emergency Services Director for Bamberg County E-911. Among her many responsibilities is making sure calls to 911 are handled promptly and professionally, and that information is routed to the appropriate first responders. To Bamberg County E-911, its phone system is literally a lifeline.

Phone System Needed Replacement

“We knew we needed a new phone system. Our previous one had become outdated and parts were no longer available for repair. What’s more, that phone system had gone through a couple of lightning strikes in the past,” says Hammond.

How callers communicate had also changed, further necessitating the need for Bamberg County E-911 to replace its phone system. “Our callers are getting emergency messages to us in new ways, such as through texting, social media posts and sending pictures. Our call reports tell us we’re getting fewer landline calls and more wireless calls, so we must be ready for the wireless market,” Hammond notes.

VESTA 911 Fits Today and Tomorrow

In 2014, Bamberg County E-911 chose Frontier to provide a new VESTA 911 phone system from Airbus DS Communications (formerly Cassidian). This system combines Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) call handling with advanced call-control technologies to support the emergency and administrative call-taking needs of PSAPs.

“For our dispatchers, the VESTA 911 phone system has meant clearer calls and the ability to handle calls more quickly and efficiently. For our database clerk, it’s meant getting immediate reports. We’re well positioned for the future, too. The VESTA 911 will make it easier for us to con-vert to the Next Generation 911 process, which Bamberg County plans to do in 3-5 years,” Hammond explains.



Affordable Solutions, Responsive Service

Bamberg County chose to utilize Frontier's Shield, operating expense (OPEX), lease program to finance the VESTA 911 phone system. Additionally, due to the palatable monthly payments of Shield, Bamberg was able to bundle in the Frontier 60-month Maintenance Plan. Shield helped meet Bamberg County's financial challenges. "We're a small rural county; we don't have the tax base of larger counties. So while we needed to update our phone system, we weren't financially prepared for an outright purchase. Frontier's Shield leasing program let us spread payments over a longer term," says Hammond.

Bamberg County E-911 chose to work with Frontier for several reasons. "First of all, we wanted a dependable vendor, not a business that's only going to be around for a few years. Frontier is in this for the long haul and that's very important to me. Frontier's people became part of my team. I know my 911 situation and Frontier knows their technology. It's a good combination. I'm always given complete information by Frontier and included in the discussions when decisions need to be made," Hammond notes.



(Left to right) Timothy Groves, Frontier Sales and Service Technician;
Sharon Hammond, Emergency Services Director for Bamberg County;
Tracy Fryar, Frontier Local Operations Manager

She particularly appreciates the dedication and professionalism of Timothy Groves, Frontier Sales and Service Technician. "During the installation process for our new phone system, Timothy Groves was on-site a lot. It was like he was family. He'd say, 'I work for you.' He would come in my office, draw me a diagram and make sure I understood all the details. That impressed me. He was so precise in his assessment and very careful during planning and implementation. He surveyed all my phones lines and made sure they were working, even the lines that weren't from Frontier, and he found two lines we had been paying for but no longer using. We were able to drop them and save some money," recalls Hammond.

Tracy Fryar, Frontier Local Operations Manager, manages the Frontier team involved with the installation and ongoing support of the phone system. "I'm extremely proud of our team and their service to Bamberg County E-911," says Fryar.

It's a level of quality noticed by Hammond. She says, "When you put in a new phone system, you need to be able to go home and sleep at night without getting notified of problems. I could do that with Frontier."

“I know my 911 situation and Frontier knows their technology. It's a good combination.”

— SHARON HAMMOND, EMERGENCY SERVICES
DIRECTOR, BAMBERG COUNTY E-911

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