

CASE STUDY



Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service Deploys ESN-Ready solution from Westbase.io

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service are set to become an early adopter of the new Emergency Services Network (ESN), providing improved communications connectivity for the Norfolk County Council funded fire service. Operating across more than 2000 square miles of largely rural countryside, the fire service has one of the largest geographical areas which means reliable communications are essential.

To achieve this, Norfolk Fire and Rescue wanted to deploy a Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) solution across its fleet of 66 vehicles, enlisting Panasonic TOUGHBOOK to deliver both ruggedised tablets and a Cradlepoint 4G LTE solution. Working with Panasonic and Cradlepoint, Westbase.io helped to supply the technical solutions and best practice installation advice needed.



Improving Communications across Norfolk

Norfolk's MDTs are used for receiving and providing vital information on the way to an incident, such as sending **status** updates, risk assessment requirements, details on the occupancy of the premises and nearby hydrant locations. Panasonic TOUGHBOOK 33 tablets were selected as the MDT and installed into the front cabs of Norfolk's fire appliances.

To deliver to Norfolk's connectivity requirements, the Cradlepoint Mobile NetCloud solution with COR IBR1700 router was also selected. Providing multiple 4G network connections via EE and Vodafone, the vehicle router will also connect to the forthcoming UK Emergency Services Network once available. To further optimise connectivity, Panorama Antennas are fitted to the vehicle roofs for best possible signal.

The solution provided by Westbase.io and its partners delivers a ruggedised LTE Advanced Pro networking platform to provide reliable and secure connectivity to the emergency service mobile command centres. This means that in addition to supporting communications within the fire appliance itself, the solution also creates a 100m, line of sight, wireless local area network around the vehicles, enabling firefighters to remove the MDT from the cab and take it with them during incidents. This allows them to deliver the best possible incident response with confidence, sending and receiving fast, up-to-date information on site. This can be used for continued communication with the command centre at the scene of an incident or to assist fire crews with detailed schematics of buildings or vehicles to help rescue trapped people.

Using Cradlepoint's NetCloud Manager for remote deployment, monitoring and configuration of the network, ongoing management is also simplified by allowing central IT teams to support the solution when it's in the field.

"The Panasonic device itself is great and we are yet to have a single failure. The Cradlepoint routers have also been rock solid. We can observe the connectivity to each vehicle and see the physical location on a map. We can see exactly how the EE and Vodafone networks are performing and we have seen a significant improvement in connectivity. A lot of the uptimes are now 100% and we have a solution ready for the switch to ESN," said Anthony Fearn, ICT Technical Manager at Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service.

Reliable Connectivity Today for the ESN of the Future

The solution components are all certified for use with the new Emergency Services Network which will transform emergency services' mobile working, especially in remote areas and at times of network congestion. The new Norfolk solution can be easily switched to use the new ESN network as it becomes available, positioning the fire service to be one of the first adopters.

"We were looking to the future and aiming to provide the best possible coverage for our vehicles. Norfolk County Council has already carried out significant work to improve connectivity across the county. So much so, that they have been recognised as Connected Britain Digital Council of the Year. Where there are gaps in coverage we required a solution to improve connectivity, with powerful antennas on the roof of vehicles, to give us the best connection possible."

ANTHONY FEARN
ICT TECHNICAL MANAGER
NORFOLK FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Panasonic and Westbase.io: A Long-term Partnership

Westbase.io helped to deliver Norfolk's best-in-class, ESN-ready solution through its long-term partner Panasonic and their own extended network.

"The education and ongoing support from Westbase.io allows us to bring all the components together as a single solution which really simplifies things," said Will Holmes, Emergency Services Business Manager UK and Ireland for Panasonic Toughbook. "The breadth of technical input allows us to drive a better solution for our customers by delivering a single process, saving money and rollout time."

Chris Kerslake, Senior Account Director at Westbase.io said, *"The Norfolk Fire and Rescue ESN deployment has been a great project to be involved in. Their focus on getting ESN-ready with the chosen Cradlepoint and Panasonic solution is leading the way for other emergency services who are also evaluating the benefits of the new network, and how best to begin their own ESN journey. Westbase.io's long-term partnership with Panasonic means we've been able to support their requirements to make this process as smooth as possible."*

If you have any questions about this case study, or the solution and products involved, then please contact Westbase.io:



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