

TANDBERG CUSTOMER PROFILE

Port Arthur, Texas Fire Department



THE TANDBERG SOLUTION:

- Two TANDBERG Site Commanders, a beta-phase solution built specifically for fire departments
- Two TANDBERG 150 MXP desktop units
- One TANDBERG Border Controller
- One TANDBERG Gatekeeper
- One Tactical MXP Command Center (TCC), a self-contained rugged, mobile unit that has been modified to communicate from the field via satellite.

TANDBERG HELPS THE PORT ARTHUR FIRE DEPARTMENT GAIN AN EXTREME ADVANTAGE

In any natural disaster, smaller, isolated communities are often hit the hardest and left with the greatest vulnerability in the aftermath. Sabine Pass, Texas was no exception. When Hurricane Rita hit on the heels of Hurricane Katrina, the devastation wrought on Sabine Pass nearly destroyed the town. The local fire station (one of seven stations in the Port Arthur Fire Department) was so severely damaged that the facility was shuttered and its firefighters relocated, leaving the community without a critical portion of its safety network. The need for reconstruction was urgent, and the community made a plea for assistance: help us renew our community by rebuilding our vital infrastructure — a home for local first responders.

The experienced team from Extreme Makeover: Home Edition (EM:HE) took on the challenge, assembling a team of volunteers and service providers, with TANDBERG as the video provider of choice. Working around the clock for four straight days, the team helped to deliver far more than repairs. In fact, they delivered a future of new possibilities for the Sabine Pass and Port Arthur Fire Department's emergency response teams and the communities they protect.

When an EM:HE team representative from a leading provider of voice, data and networking services, was asked, "If you had to go to war with any video conferencing provider, who would it be?" the answer was TANDBERG, hands-down. "We were honored to be asked," says Southwest Region Grants Manager Casey Rossetti. "TANDBERG has been working with fire and rescue organizations for a number of years on Assistance to Firefighters Grants. We saw this as an opportunity to provide the Port Arthur Fire Department with solutions specifically designed for firefighters — something that meets their needs and improves their ability to serve their community. It was an exciting opportunity, and we were delighted to give back to the firefighters of the Sabine Pass and Port Arthur communities."



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CHALLENGES

When it came to designing the right solution for Sabine Pass, TANDBERG knew that the solution must address the lessons learned and problems identified from recent natural and man-made disasters. Specifically, how could video make a difference — before, during and after an emergency — in this environment? What issues must be resolved by this solution?

- Increased Training & Preparedness — In the face of these disasters, even the most highly trained personnel were unable to respond with the level of effectiveness required.
- Compromised Infrastructures — When power and networks collapsed, traditional lines of communication were unavailable, with no alternatives.
- Regional Collaboration — The ability to communicate with other safety and emergency response organizations would have enabled more effective response and more strategic use of available resources.

In addition, the TANDBERG solution must operate flawlessly in the tough environment of the first responder. The solution had to be:

- Simple and easy to use
- Rugged and sturdy for a harsh, demanding environment
- Flexible enough to handle multiple uses
- Able to interconnect with other first-responder entities

AN OPPORTUNITY TO REBUILD GAINS MOMENTUM

With these challenges in mind, the TANDBERG team designed a visual communication solution that would dramatically strengthen the ability of Sabine Pass' firefighters to react to future disasters.

TRAINING AND READINESS — Previously, when the Sabine Pass fire fighters trained, they had to travel nearly 20 miles to Port Arthur. This exposed Sabine Pass to higher risks to property and personal safety by leaving the station short staffed and increasing response times. In order to fulfill mandated training requirements and enable increased training opportunities, while still keeping all the key personnel in their stations, TANDBERG outfitted two of the stations with Site Commander units to allow for distance learning via video. The large plasma screens enclosed in a rugged Lexan exterior are sturdy enough to handle the most demanding firehouse environment. Simple to use and flexible enough to switch easily from video conferencing and live training mode to DVD or VCR mode, the firefighters can quickly and easily plug in training materials from federal, local and state sources. The units can also receive cable TV and attach gaming systems for crew down-time entertainment.

MOBILITY & SUSTAINED COMMUNICATIONS — To enable sustained emergency planning, response and management, even in periods of power outages and traditional communications breakdowns, the TANDBERG solution for Sabine Pass includes a Tactical MXP Command Center. This mobile trailer-based system is designed to be used in the field, providing instant assessment by sending live audio and video from a crisis scene over satellite back to any central point — such as a command center, a mobile command center, or an emergency operations center.

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The Tactical Command Center includes a backup generator and a strong satellite link, affording IP connectivity and the ability to deploy immediately to virtually any emergency location and connect back to any of the stations with video. The video component is a TANDBERG Tactical MXP, a rugged, self contained field unit designed for use in the most extreme environments. Used in conjunction with the satellite trailer, this solution creates a completely mobile tactical solution.

IN SIGHT, IN MIND

Beyond training and field work, this solution also provides equally important collaborative benefits, including:

LATERAL COMMUNICATION & COORDINATION — Infrastructure pieces to be installed at City Hall will allow Port Arthur and Sabine Pass to communicate through firewalls. By establishing a video communication network with some of their neighboring fire departments, the fire stations will be able to create mutual aid agreements and support one another with specialized equipment, training or other resources.

ADMINISTRATIVE & TEAM BUILDING — Included in the solution are two TANDBERG 150 MXP desktop units, so a Captain or Battalion Chief can take or make video calls from their desks. Higher level administrators can have personal meetings with local chiefs more often, enabling them to stay attuned to the station needs, communicate more efficiently and help their extended fire department network act more as a coordinated, cohesive team.

This level of face-to-face communication can also aid better coordination with central commands and with related agencies, including local public health, public works and transportation departments. By creating these new, cooperative relationships, even remote stations can be more responsive and proactive in their efforts.

READY FOR EXTREME CHALLENGES

The TANDBERG solution is also helping the fire department explore new innovations and techniques in fire safety tools such as thermal imaging camera technology which can, from outside a building or emergency area, enable responders to quickly identify the location of survivors that need to be evacuated or the location of the fire outbreak. Instead of having to record the image, take back and download it, send it in and have it translated, emergency responders will be able to transmit thermal imaging as a live video source. Much faster response can be provided — and those minutes can save lives and property.

“The TANDBERG system can be tremendously beneficial for any fire department, but especially so for the Port Arthur region, which not only is prone to hurricanes but also home to many large oil refineries,” said Wayne A. Roccaforte, the Port Arthur training battalion chief. “With this solution, Port Arthur and Sabine Pass are much better prepared to meet some of the areas unique challenges. We can now take an important step toward recovery and transform the way that we train for and respond to emergencies — ultimately providing our citizens with a safer community.”

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