



E9-1-1 system,” stated Rod Stauffer Siemens Corporation’s project manager.

The team assembled in Atlanta, GA and got to work. They purchased a trailer and gutted it. They installed a complete E9-1-1 system ready to be plugged into the phone system and electrical supply. But the Siemens/MicroAutomation team knew they couldn’t depend on standard electrical power so they outfitted the trailer with 48 car batteries and a generator. The trailer also included desks, chairs, computers, state-of-the-art telecommunications, radio, recording equipment and software. Working around the clock, the trailer was completely outfitted and operational in 5 days.



A convoy left on September 16 to deliver the trailer and arrived at the outskirts of Plaquemines Parish on Louisiana State Route 39 only to be stopped by the National Guard. The Guard’s orders were clear; no one could enter the Parish.

“With communications compromised, they hadn’t gotten the word from FEMA to let us through,” said Gursahaney. “We had some good local maps of the Parish, at least how it was before Katrina, and we found a back road where the authorities at the checkpoint were more accommodating. We sort of felt our way along among the debris and washed out roadways.”

Within a few hours the team found the location where the mobile E9-1-1 system would be “hooked-up” to a building in Belle Chase, LA. But many more challenges lay ahead. Bell South was still trying to get enough lines operational to “plug”

into the 911 system. On top of that MicroAutomation had been told to equip the trailer with PRI switching equipment and software. Bell South workers on site told MicroAutomation they would need Centralized Automatic Message Accounting Circuits (CAMA), instead.

This new compatibility conflict forced the team to make some on the fly “fixes” that would have made McGyver proud. “We called back to our offices in Virginia and had them configure a new computer with software that would be CAMA compatible,” indicated Gursahaney. “They overnight expressed it to Baton Rouge, as that was the closest point anyone could deliver anything. We drove out, picked it up and brought it back to the trailer. After a number of hours of work and rewiring major portions of the system throughout the trailer, we were able to convert to CAMA.”

On September 26, less than a month after the disaster, the system was put online and began taking emergency calls. Plaquemines Parish residents and employees returned to begin their personal clean-ups. The mobile E9-1-1 trailer is still in use three months later and is as dependable as any permanent building system in the country.

Based on the success of the solution, FEMA is considering buying four additional mobile E9-1-1 trailers and deploying them around the country so they can be available on a moments notice to be transported to a disaster site. “If the trailer was already built-out and available when Katrina hit we probably would have been operational two weeks earlier,” concluded Stauffer.



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