



# to the rescue in time of crisis.

With the responsibility of the largest county in England, housing 738,000 people who depend on the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (NYFR), there is increased pressure on the voice and data networks. Add to this, the unthinkable happened – NYFR’s network was badly damaged by a flood, downing their already aged network. Voyager assisted the Fire and Rescue services at their very own – time of crisis.

## previous system

The fire authority’s Brigade HQ (BHQ) is based in Northallerton, and oversees three principle sites in York, Scarborough and Harrogate; eight day-crewed stations; 23 retained stations; two volunteer stations and a training centre. Reliable, cost effective and up-to-date communications are key to the NYFR’s operations and the services it provides for the community.

NYFR’s original network comprised of a five year-old WAN, encompassing 35 stations, linked back to BHQ with a mixture of kilostream and ISDN2e bearers. Each station was fitted with separate legacy PBX phone networks, but it became clear that the current systems were inhibiting the brigade’s service to the community. Many officers require access to the BHQ servers to fulfil their public roles. The old system was stopping officers from making the most of their roles in the community, as it delivered a fragmented, unreliable service that allowed little or no connectivity between stations.

## connectivity requirements

“The focus of the modern fire service is about fire prevention rather than intervention; something we call the ‘Community Fire Safety’ initiative. For this to work and to help build strong relationships with the community, our officers require connectivity to our networks whilst on the road,” commented Gerry Seal, communications officer, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue.

## counting the cost

As the team made plans for building a new communications network, the unthinkable happened and York Fire Station was badly flooded. The flood caused irreparable damage to the station’s data and voice networks. This meant that a new system would have to be implemented sooner than originally anticipated.

“The flooded fire station in York caused damage not only to the PBX, but to the data network, increasing its unpredictability and unreliability. We had to remedy the

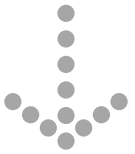
situation quickly to ensure that the station’s networks weren’t compromising the integrity of our service,” said Seal.

When viewing alternatives to replace the old system, the communications department realised the huge costs involved in using the old telephone network. The annual phone bill for calls made from York station alone came to £1,600. However, the majority of these calls, totalling over £1,000, were calls made from York station to BHQ.

“When considering replacements for York’s voice and data networks, we couldn’t believe the costs that built up from making critical inter-office calls. We knew from the research we’d done that if you transferred voice over data lines, the majority of calls made would be free and you would only have to pay for the line rental,” commented Seal.

## continued overleaf





## assisting fire authorities in time of crisis.

### where to go next

NYFR questioned whether the fire service could use its existing 64k Kilostream fixed data link for a converged data and voice network, therefore drastically reducing the costs of calls. It approached Cisco for advice and three partners were suggested for NYFR to approach.

“From the list of Cisco partners, Voyager came through as our favourite. Its sales team didn’t push the hard sell, they were technically competent, the cost suited our budgets and they were able to give us another fire service site as a reference,” added Seal.

Voyager consulted with NYFR on the type of solutions required. This process took into account the current infrastructure, number of sites requiring IP Telephony installation, whether remote access was required and any preparations for future extensions.

### getting it right

Seal continued: “Voyager spent a lot of time with us, making sure all our expectations of IP Telephony were set. By the end of it, we knew exactly what we could and could not do with the technology. In the last 18 months, stations in York, Scarborough and Harrogate have all been fitted with new networks consisting of Cisco call managers, 7940 IP phones, 3524 powered switches and 2600 routers.”

### the result

Since the initial implementation, NYFR fire fighters, staff and officers have all seen a dramatic improvement in usability and efficiency of its telephone networks. As mobile working becomes easier and quicker, the Community Fire Safety programme has become a lot more accessible to both officers and the public.

The adoption of IP Telephony has brought much needed flexibility and large cost savings to the organisation. The unified messaging software means that voice mail and email can now be accessed remotely and more quickly. Many officers are able to work more flexibly and maximise office time as they can ‘hotdesk’ around the county, moving from one station to another. The nature of this system means that voice mails and phonebooks can all be retrieved from any networked phone within the region.

“Once all the stations are rolled out, NYFR will have a highly flexible, easy to maintain telephony system, which won’t just benefit our staff but also the entire community. We have eight day crewed stations waiting to get onto the network, then BHQ will be the final implementation. The differences are already quite dramatic and we anticipate that the benefits will just keep on coming,” concluded Seal.

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The benefits of IP Telephony from Voyager:

- Dramatic improvement in usability.
- Greater access for officers and the public to the Community Fire Safety programme
- Flexibility and large cost saving to the organisation
- Cisco Unity messaging
- Remote access to email and voice mail
- Highly flexible, easy to maintain telephony system.

For further information please contact:  
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“corporate communications are critical to success”



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