



Case Study:

Atlantic City Casinos Collaborate With Multimedia Communications System



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Executive Summary

All of the casinos in Atlantic City have embraced and installed Mutualink's multimedia communications collaboration system with the help and guidance of the New Jersey State Police, Casino Gaming Bureau, Atlantic City Police Department, Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness and other state organizations. Mutualink allows all participants to share live video, files, images, and audio via mobile radio and landline/cell phone with each other when incidents occur on any of the properties or surrounding areas. Although casinos function in a highly competitive market, the casino operators recognize their common responsibilities and issues in providing a safe and secure environment for the millions of customers who visit their establishments annually. Law enforcement and other agencies responsible for the health, welfare, and safety of the Greater Atlantic City community provided the necessary leadership and coordination to make implementation a reality.

The Problem

Providing coverage within a typical casino property is a significant challenge due to the size, number of rooms and the multiple concurrent operational, safety and security responsibilities spread across various teams.

Casinos maintain several radio systems to serve the needs of the property, most have two or three separate radio systems or channels. Each casino property operates on its own proprietary channels for privacy.

None of these support live video or file/image transfers. Each casino has extensive video security and surveillance resources monitored by specialists, however, during an incident the captured video cannot be shared with personnel on the casino floor or other agencies and these are vital elements in effective incident response.

Common Concerns

There are approximately 1,500 separate Casino properties in the United States, all of whom share a common concern for protecting their visitors and properties. The Casinos in Atlantic City are no exception. While independent, sophisticated, and extensive marketing is first on their list, every casino has the common responsibility for the safety and security of their property.



Initial Interest

The November 2007 Showboat Casino hostage situation and the horrific 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks further emphasized the necessity of a system that can empower a speedy, coordinated response in emergencies. Many saw the usefulness of Mutualink LNK360 in coordinating incident responses among the various public safety agencies and casinos themselves.

With significant help from the public safety community, the Atlantic City casinos banded together with the joint implementation of Mutualink's unique communications collaboration system. Once implemented, leadership quickly recognized Mutualink's innovative solution's potential and eagerly shared the system's capabilities with stakeholders. While Mutualink was initially developed for incident response, the system has proven to be an incredible resource for daily operations, streamlining efficiencies. Everyone embraced Mutualink's many benefits and uses.

First Deployment

By the spring of 2009, the Atlantic City Police Department implemented Mutualink. Shortly thereafter, the Atlantic County Office of Emergency Preparedness installed Mutualink at their Emergency Operations Center. Next, the Atlantic City Board of Education installed Mutualink for the Atlantic City High School. Next, other members of the public and private sector communities joined the growing Mutualink network.

The initial commitment of the Atlantic City PD was crucial. The value they saw in the system encouraged them to take a “build it and they will come” approach, and they were correct. This seamless communications solution powered encrypted, real-time sharing of video, image, voice and text, and enabled seamless interoperable communications by connecting their existing radio systems with other agencies’ systems. The invitation-only nature of sharing vital data allowed facilities to maintain control of their assets while still benefiting from support when needed, eliminating any concerns of privacy or legality.

With Mutualink’s capability of connecting disparate radio equipment, personnel could now communicate with each other. The common voice network capabilities of Mutualink proved to be quite useful during emergencies as well as during key community events that involved staff from both the City and the County such as the Around the Island Swim, the Atlantic City Beachfront Air Show, Miss America Contest, air shows and other open-air music concerts. Files, images, video ad texts were shared among all participants.



First Deployment: Board of Education, Atlantic City PD and OEM

Through Mutualink, the entire community could also communicate with hundreds of other state agencies and entities using Mutualink at that time, including public safety, hospitals shopping malls and schools, providing regional collaboration.

Critical Requirements

Mutualink met three critical requirements that were key to its acceptance. First, each entity must always maintain control of its communications resources. That is, each entity’s initial and ongoing participation in a collaboration session must be under their control; others can “invite” them to participate and request they bring their communications resources. Each invited agency then can decide to “accept” or “reject” the invitation or, once involved, leave the session at any time.

The second critical factor required the solution to operate in a distributed network without having any one central controlling agency or entity. Since the solution is designed to support any type of natural accident or manmade disaster, an almost unlimited combination of agencies and resources can work together seamlessly.

Additionally, since incidents do not necessarily follow political boundaries, and often agencies have different responsibilities, capabilities, governance, operational restrictions, and procedures, expecting one agency to act as the all-knowing- control “master” is impractical and discourages collaboration. Instead, participants are able to create a session at any time and invite whomever they desire to participate as they deem necessary.

The third critical factor is that the participant can leverage existing security investments, and are not required to replace any existing infrastructure.

Involvement of Others

The NJ Division of Gaming Enforcement in conjunction with Homeland Security Preparedness and the State Police took on the task of implementing an interoperable communications system for use by the casinos and public safety as well as other community partners. Funding arrived in time to solve many of Atlantic City’s public safety concerns.



The Last Hurdle

The Gaming Industry is a heavily regulated sector of the state's economy. Maintaining public trust is imperative. Rules and regulations coupled with the potential of significant fines for non-compliance naturally caused reluctance for casino operators. A statutory restriction on the sharing of casino video beyond the property added to the complexity.

After careful analysis and review by the state attorney general, a decision was reached deeming that Mutualink met the requirements of public law.

In October of 2011, Paula T. Dow, Attorney General at the time, and David Rebuch, Director of the Division of Gaming Enforcement at the time, announced that the State had entered into an agreement with the casinos for the installation of Mutualink to enhance the safety and security of Atlantic City's Tourism District. Quoting Attorney General Dow:

"Once deployed, Mutualink will ensure the seamless interoperability of critical communications systems so that when we need to share information in the heat of an emergency, when lives are at stake, the lines of communication will be open."

Others supported Attorney General Dow's position.

"Maximizing safety in Atlantic City requires state and local law enforcement and emergency management agencies to work closely with casino security personnel," said Charles B. McKenna, Director of the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, ***"the establishment of a Mutualink system will make Atlantic City safer by providing enhanced communication, leading to better law enforcement and emergency management response efforts."***

Implementing Mutualink

After receiving the official notice to proceed in October of 2011, Mutualink moved quickly to implement the solution. Site surveys were conducted to determine the best location for equipment at each facility, network connectivity options were discussed and finalized, existing radio and video systems interfacing details were carefully examined and detailed per site equipment lists, and installation plans were completed.

Mutualink's Capabilities

The Mutualink solution now allowed casino's surveillance and security teams to independently create interoperability sessions with not only the public safety community but also with each other. In addition to powering a faster and better response in emergencies, Mutualink enables casinos to enhance safety and security in general and streamline daily operations across properties.

More Than Atlantic City and Casinos

Although this case study has focused on the Atlantic City Casinos and the associated public safety agencies, the problems that Mutualink addressed apply to every casino locale, anywhere in the world. Beyond the gaming industry, other public and private market sectors faces similar challenges.

Maintaining a safe and secure environment and being able to respond quickly and effectively to incidents, whether the acts are man-made or natural, is a universal requirement.

Being able to share critical information in the shortest amount of time ensures the health, safety and welfare of our communities.

About Mutualink

Saving Minutes When Seconds Count™ | Mutualink is committed to improving public safety, protecting mission-critical systems and enhancing situational awareness by building safer and smarter communities. Mutualink connects first responders for situational awareness while enabling on-demand unified voice, radio, video and data communication and collaboration across diverse systems, to help save lives and protect property.

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