



The Haivision Podcast

Real Time Intelligence Centers & Emergency Operations with Jamie Hudson – Part 1

Summary of the episode

In our first episode of the Haivision Podcast, we delve into the transformative world of video technology in public safety with Jamie Hudson, who masterfully manages both the real-time information center and emergency operations for the Elk Grove Police Department.

This discussion uncovers how cutting-edge video wall technology and digital platforms revolutionize traditional emergency operations center (EOC) practices. Hudson shares insights on the pivotal role of real-time centers in streamlining disaster response and enhancing inter-agency collaboration through video technology. By facilitating mutual aid and improving resource management, these innovations offer significant operational benefits and pose unique challenges. Hudson's dual role exemplifies the critical impact of technology in boosting situational awareness and optimizing public safety protocols, making this episode a must-listen for professionals keen on the intersection of technology and emergency management.

Introduction to the Haivision Podcast

Welcome to the Haivision Podcast, where we take a deep dive into the innovations and challenges shaping video technology.

In each episode, we'll bring you insights from experts behind cutting-edge video networking, visual collaboration, and video wall solutions.

So whether you're a professional navigating the complexities of video wall technology, working in live production, or someone who's simply curious about new tech, this podcast is for you.

Join us as we explore the latest trends, share success stories, and discuss the technology shaping the future of mission-critical video environments.

In this episode, our sales team, Dustin, Jason, and Matt, speak with Jamie Hudson, current director of real-time consulting at Flock Safety, about the importance of using your real-time intelligence center to provide inter-agency visual aid.

Enjoy!

00:01:00

My name is Jamie Hudson. I'm the real-time information center manager for the Elk Grove Police Department, also the city's emergency manager, so responsible for disaster preparedness, EOC, emergency operations centers, standing up those during times of disasters, etc.

I've been in law enforcement for 31 years, started my career in the 911 dispatch world, worked 28 years-ish in that world, and then transferred over into the real-time information center world when we built one. So, everything's new every day.

This is a pretty timely conversation, and I just thought about it when we were coming out here with Hurricane Hillary coming up, and that's the first hurricane to hit the West Coast in what, 30, 35 years? No, it's longer. Even longer than that. I think it's 70-something years. 1939, I think is what they said, was the last. 1939? Okay.

And, I mean, fortunately, you guys didn't have to deal with any inclement weather, but I saw you were sending information to Palm Springs PD. Did Elk Grove have to activate? Did you guys activate?

Yeah, so basically in the emergency operations center world, there's always been a very, not always, but for the long time, has been a very well-established system for response and mitigation of disasters, from the planning phases all the way into the mitigation phase afterwards.

And so that's there, and part of that is mutual aid.

And, you know, if you exhaust your resources for any given event and you need more resources, you can grab those from various agencies.

What we're trying to do in the real-time center space is provide video mutual aid to agencies as they go through these either critical criminal events or critical man-made events onward to the disasters that are natural.

And if you think about, you know, if you have a finite number of resources within your own emergency operations center, yet you don't have enough people to get everything that you really do need, intelligence-wise.

So if we need more video, if we need to see, there's, you know, broadcast television networks, we'll play those all day long in the emergency operations centers.

But if we need those plus anybody on the ground streaming live on social media, plus any of the video assets that we have available to us in law enforcement and city government, then you need those, yet you don't have enough people for it.

So what we're trying to do is show that real-time centers that aren't even in that general region can provide that service by ingesting all of that video I just mentioned, packaging that up and then restreaming that back out to where then the folks that are in Palm Springs, which was our example for this, they're able to just click on that URL link and see what we're streaming.

And now they don't have to do that intelligence work. Now we've done that and sent it down to them. And so that's kind of the concept around that.

If we're not impacted, then we should help if they need help, right?

And that's just law enforcement in general, fire service as well. If you're not impacted, generally speaking, you're going to be the ones that go and help once they exhaust their resources.

So we're testing that out, right? And we're testing it out in the real world. So we wouldn't test it if we didn't think it would work.

But we want to show that there's a different angle to how mutual aid looks and how regionalization looks.

So you don't need me to get on a plane and fly down to Palm Springs before the storm hits to bunker down and then provide that service. We can provide it from right here where it's sunny. And we're not stressed out, right? We're getting it and just sending it down.

00:04:51 – Tasks of an Emergency Operation Center Manager

Q: I mean, it seems widely uncommon that you're not only the EOC manager, but also the real-time information center manager.

A: Yes. Uncommon is a good word for that.

Q: Are there literally two operation centers, like two physical operations?

A: There are. Yeah. I've not met my counterpart yet. So I'm still waiting to meet somebody who does both. But I mean, if I'm being honest, it is a manageable job for one person because of the type of city I work in, because of what we do every day, business-wise, et cetera. So it's not overwhelming for a single person to do both of these positions.

And it actually has paid off for our city and our police department from COVID management all the way through last winter when we had some incredible rain that broke our levees and caused evacuations, et cetera.

So ultimately, it's a job that, it turns out, is very conducive with being efficient in both worlds. Because if you think about a general emergency operations center setting where everybody comes and you have all of your different divisions that are working an event, what you miss oftentimes are various pieces of intelligence, various pieces of information coming in an efficient way, a managed way that's organized. So in a traditional emergency operations center, your planning section is planning for what's going to happen in the next operational period. Your operations element is really the one that's getting you all of this information and doing all of this different work in real-time.

Logistics is grabbing things and getting everything ready that needs to be ready to deliver to the operations folks to do stuff. And what we find is that keeping all of that information efficiently maintained is difficult. Some places do it very well and credit to them.

They plan, they train, they do it.

Others don't do it very well because maybe they don't open in EOC very often.

So you're asking folks who this isn't their normal world to work in and you're asking them to now jump into it.

So there's tech platforms out there where you can push all of your information into this tech platform and it will organize it for you. But what I've found is that we'll have a lot of info pushed in there, not very many people searching that information that's in there. So we're accomplishing the getting it in there.

Insert a real time information center and now you have a center that is not just getting the info but also delivering it to who matters and who needs it right now. And they're the ones organizing that information.

So they're working both the law enforcement police side of whatever event they're working but also we have a liaison between that center and the EOC to ensure that that information is real time. The latency isn't 30 minutes old.

So that's the challenge. I love that challenge! I love the idea that we can do that.

And honestly, we are experimenting with more of a remote EOC concept also to where we may have section chiefs in a room but everybody else may be remote. And it all has to do with connectivity so obviously there's going to be things that come into play.

Great job for sure.

Pulled in many directions constantly but super rewarding and I love that type of challenge to really show how can both of these augment each other and really be efficient.

00:08:37 – RTIC Technology Trends

Q: I'm wondering, because you're unique and you wear these two hats, are you seeing technology trends that are similar in both spaces?

A: I am. Because they're both mission critical, they're both leveraging technology to accomplish real time situational awareness.

Q: Are you seeing that?

A: Yeah and the tech that I see that's similar but yet I don't even know that the two spaces know that each of the spaces has this type of technology.

I was talking about platforms where you ingest information into those and do that. In the real-time world we have those platforms as well.

And it's almost as if we haven't seen these before and now this is this new technology when in reality, we've had platforms that allow for information ingestion and intelligence ingestion for quite some time. So there are those, right, those general platforms that are used and widely available.

But in the fast-forwarded technology world it is all about video and it's all about the ability to stream intel and information to the right people.

So in that space 100% we're looking at video wall, we're looking at video display processor the ability for display processors to not just capture and push video and information but

also be able to be queried for information from users that are remote. So if they know which ones to grab then great.

Now they're grabbing video from different input clients that make sense. As opposed to not.

00:10:13 – Looking Back on Past Technology

So if you think EOCs of the 90s, the 80s, the 90s, etc. you think tons of white boards, tons of when 3M made sticky sheets they were God's gift to EOCs, right?

So you just think of that technology kind of progressing from there.

But now it's literally video and it is, you know, the EOC of today doesn't have to have 62 monitors because you have 61 broadcast networks that might broadcast something imperative.

You can have somebody conducting that and really packaging it up to where every time I look up to a video wall it actually makes sense as opposed to it's just information that just happens to be sitting there.

So in that realm to me that's the most significant tech crossover into the two is we need to share video.

And so on an everyday application we do that with our dispatch center. And so if you think of it in the same way that's what we're talking about. We take video we're working we send that in there in real time with zero latency and they can act on that with that.

Right?

Same with an EOC. If we can share video between a real time center, a dispatch center, an EOC and our responders not degrade the bandwidth of what we're trying to push out, what they're trying to access, that's where they cross over 100%.

00:11:37 – Multiple Agencies in one Crime Center

Q: Do you see this model, I mean you had mentioned like it's manageable for Elk Grove because of the size. Do you see this model, I mean clearly there's some advantages to this model. Do you see this model being adapted in maybe larger metropolitan cities?

A: I think it's scalable for sure. I don't know what that limit is for a one-man band so to speak to be able to efficiently handle both.

However, you certainly have an organizational structure that would lean towards that being able to be done.

So let's say emergency management is a city function and real time center is a police function.

You can certainly have an emergency manager and a real-time center manager that work under the same umbrella to accomplish the same thing.

So you can do it.

I think it'll require collaboration more than scalability I suppose. But we're a city of 178,000 residents. Daytime population fluctuates depending on what time of day it is.

And we're probably up at the top end of what's manageable for a single person to do both of those. But again, it's organizational structure.

So we could probably do more with more people, more staff in any given way.

So I think if a city wanted to at minimum collaborate, connect and ensure that both are walking the same path, that's certainly doable.

100%.

Yeah, I mean, since you sit on both sides of the fence, has there been any one key piece of information, whether we talk about video, but one particular asset over another or one strategy in terms of like, oh, hey, if we put a sworn officer in the EOC during an activation, this greatly enhances our communication.

00:13:39 – Staffing Your Real-Time Center

Q: Have you run into anything like that?

A: So communication-wise, sworn or non-sworn, I think it's imperative that you have somebody that's dedicated as a liaison anytime you introduce “newness” into an EOC.

And so “newness” meaning if video information and intelligence being pushed into an EOC is new for that organization, you have to make sure you have a liaison from the pushing point, which would be the real time center into that EOC.

So that when somebody inevitably looks at you and goes, what are we looking at here?

You're able to explain that and give them that educational piece of that.

So as it relates to that, there's always value in having liaisons, be them sworn or non sworn.

In the real time center space, there is absolute value in having sworn staff or sworn members working within a real time center.

We don't have that here at Elk Grove, but I'll give you the easiest analogy as to why there's value.

If I'm watching a video and I see somebody punch somebody else in the face, I can tell the units on the street, somebody just punched somebody in the face.

It's here on video.

A sworn officer can see the same thing, can decide and determine based on their training experience; this particular crime has just occurred.

And they're able to relay that to responding officers to say not just, I just saw this guy punch somebody in the face, but he is arrestable or she is arrestable for this.

And so they can take a little quicker action based on that, based on the experience of the other officer. So there's absolute value to having sworn in a real-time center.

There's value to having sworn police presence in an emergency operations center, especially as it relates to operations. That's the bulk of what we're dealing with in real time for a critical incident.

So sworn are able to understand and direct what our resources are, what we're going to be doing with those resources. I think that sworn versus non-sworn in there, there's benefits to both ways.

On the real-time center space, the non-sworn, which is our shop, is completely non-sworn or civilianized, it was the executive staffs, the chief's decision to do that when we opened because he wanted there to be stability within the real-time center.

So if you think more traditional law enforcement, if you have an officer that gets a specialized assignment and they are really good at that specialized assignment, they start down a path of a promotable trajectory.

And so they go from being a really good officer in a real-time center to a new sergeant and not in the real time center anymore.

And so now we backfill. Vice versa, if you take a really good sergeant in a real time center, they may become a lieutenant pretty quickly because of that. So the chief wanted stability.

Civilian staff are hired for a purpose, they're hired in a classification, and generally speaking, aren't rotated around a department.

So you're not going to go from real-time Center Manager to you're going to go be the property and evidence manager and swap with that person or the records manager.

They're very skilled and different positions that one, I would never assume I'd know how to do those things, right?

But two, it is a level of stability that government work has and always has had to offer.

And the last piece of it is we are far less expensive to staff a real-time center than is real-time center staffed with all sworn members. So there are real-time centers that work great with all sworn members.

There are real-time centers like ours that work great with all civilian, and there's hybrid models as well. And so we are transitioning into a hybrid model soon when we started Drone as a First Responder program.

And we've made a decision as a department that our remote pilots will be sworn officers. And so we will have sworn embedded in there in the real-time center.

And we've always as a city here have had sworn embedded into our EOC operations as well, any time that we've had to open any of those.

00:17:51 – Buy-in From Your Community and Inter-Agency Collaboration

I was talking to Jay Jaison who used to be at Orlando PD and he was talking about starting their crime center, intel center. And he brought in one civilian and then he brought in a guy from SWAT. And what he liked about the guy from SWAT is they immediately got buy-in from the officers on the street because this guy was talking their lingo.

And it's funny that you bring that up because buy-in is probably the, it's what we chase every day in the real-time center space because it's been embedded in the East Coast for quite some time. The West Coast, it's still pretty new to what we do out here with policing.

And so is our buy-in, exactly as Jay, he would describe that very well. We were constantly searching for buy-in.

And if I need to hire somebody to come in and work in the real-time center on a civilian position, I love somebody who has law enforcement experience of some kind that understands what the business is about.

And if I can't have that, I love military experience, right? Because at minimum, they understand what structured business is about, right?

And so if I can get both, fantastic. But that's where I go.

So for instance, a civilian dispatcher that's been a dispatcher for quite a number of years who understands tactics of a perimeter, understands response tactics, number of officers

to send to things, even if CAD tells you something different, those brains transition very well into a real time center space.

And then that buy-in is easier even if they're not sworn because officers remember that's that dispatcher that knew this, knew that, knew this, right?

So I think it does come down to experience.

It comes down to trust, right?

People on the street that have to make critical decisions want to know they can trust what's being told to them, shown to them, etc.

So as long as you can build that trust, I think that's important.

With that said, my folks, they've had some law enforcement experience, but I've got an HR specialist who works in my center now.

I've got a record supervisor, a probation officer, right?

So they come in all different experiential sizes, so to speak, right?

But buy-in is absolutely critical and your eye must always be on that if you're trying to run one of these.

Q: Similar with an EOC, it's no different, right?

A: If you're going to run a disaster response, people need to understand and trust that you know what you're doing, right?

And if you stand in front of them and ask them to do something, they have to be willing to do that based on knowing that you know what you're asking, right?

Host: So yeah, that's the big carrot that we chase, right?

A: Yeah, sure.

Host: Well, Jamie Hudson, thank you for your time.

Really appreciate it.

And I thought this was a very insightful conversation.

I know I got a lot of useful information out of it.

Great!

Yeah, no problem.

Thanks, Jamie.