

## Handheld access to NCIC and CJIS Brings Real-time Criminal Justice Information to Seattle Police

"Having secure wireless access to NCIC and other CJIS data on handheld devices has increased officer safety and productivity. In 6 months, 5 officers ran 10,000 inquiries making over 1,000 arrests. This solution has fundamentally changed how we operate."

**Officer Tom Burns, Seattle Police Department**

**SITUATION:** Seattle Police Department needed a streamlined way to get real-time criminal justice information about suspected criminals to officers.

**SOLUTION:** Wireless BlackBerry™ handheld devices with the ATSC Public Safety Voyager solution allow officers to run NCIC queries on wants and warrants through state and federal databases without relying on a radio dispatcher.

**SUCCESS:** A dramatic decrease in query response time, resulting in more arrests, and elevated officer safety based on information available about suspected criminals.

The nationally accredited Seattle Police Department is the largest local police department in the state of Washington and, as with all major U.S. cities, it faces countless law enforcement challenges on a daily basis.

The bicycle patrol units have to contend with an additional layer of complexity because of the neighborhoods they are assigned to cover and their tendency to come in direct contact with suspected criminals. Not only are the bicycle patrol units specifically tasked with proactively searching out criminal activity and making arrests, but they also have to react to crimes as they unfold. As they encounter suspected drug dealers, repeat offenders and parolees, these officers are often in the position of requesting information on warrants and possible violations through a radio dispatcher who responds to nearly 300 calls per day. The response time from the radio dispatchers can vary from five to 20 minutes, could hamper productivity and create a situation where a suspect must be let go in accordance with a Washington state law that prohibits police from holding a suspect without cause for more than about 20 minutes.

To improve the response time, the Seattle police department worked with Nextel™ and ATSC Public Safety division in summer 2004 on a field trial to evaluate the effectiveness of the bicycle patrol officers having access to real-time information. Using ATSC Public Safety's Voyager solution on BlackBerry devices running on the Nextel nationwide network, officers could quickly run queries on suspected criminals through several state and federal databases wirelessly.

Officer Tom Burns, who participated in the field trial, offered his assessment: "There were times prior to having these handheld devices that we would have to wait several minutes for information from our radio dispatcher, and on some occasions we would see a suspect in the field and have to return to the precinct to get the information we needed. Then, all we could do was hope that we could find the same suspect once we returned to the site."



Built by ATSC Corporation



## **Handheld access to NCIC and CJIS Brings Real-time Criminal Justice Information to Seattle Police**

“Now, we have handheld access to real-time information, and the average response time on our queries is usually five to 10 seconds,” added Officer Burns. “We no longer have to worry about having to release a suspect because of a time limit, and we have increased our productivity in making arrests.”

Officers on bicycle patrol typically are able to run up to nine criminal checks via radio dispatch each day, in contrast with the BlackBerry devices running Voyager, that number has improved to roughly 25 checks per day—resulting in two to eight arrests daily. Officer Burns remarked, “Having secure wireless access to NCIC and other CJIS data on handheld wireless devices has increased officer safety and productivity. In six months, five officers ran 10,000 inquiries making over 1,000 arrests. This solution has fundamentally changed how we operate.”

To present officers with enough information to ensure the highest level of safety possible when they react to a crime in progress or unexpectedly encounter a suspected criminal, these devices are configured to provide a range of valuable information on the history of the suspect in question, including officer safety warnings, mental health alerts, gang affiliations, as well as to outstanding wants and warrants.

“Knowledge is power and because of the safety warnings we can take control of a potentially dangerous situation from the outset,” Officer Burns remarked. “You cannot put a value on that type of information. We have found these devices to be a well rounded product that makes our jobs easier, safer and can even provide social service assistance.”

“Another feature these devices have is the ability for us to access the contact information of up to 30 different social service agencies,” Officer Burns added. “That way, when we come across people on the street who need help—whether it’s because of domestic abuse, a chronic drug problem or the need to find a homeless shelter—we can give them the phone number of the appropriate agency that is suited to handle their particular need.”

The solution is Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) 140-2 certified on the BlackBerry platform for security purposes and uses AES 128-bit end-to-end encryption on all transactions, which are authenticated to meet all Washington state and FBI CJIS requirements. The Voyager solution logs and stores all transactions on a State of Washington approved server. Officers and system administrators can run reports on all previous transactions through a secure web portal that accesses the state server.

Based on the field trial’s success, the Seattle Police Department is deploying more of these handheld devices on a wider scale across other divisions within the department, including the Major Crime Task Force, Department of Corrections street teams, Intelligence, Robbery and Homicide.

### **Key Specifications**

- Handheld, Laptop, & Desktop access to NCIC/CJIS
- Platform support for RIM, Palm, PocketPC, Windows Mobile & XP
- 1xRTT, EVDO, GPRS, EDGE, iDEN, CDMA, 802.11, Private Radio
- FBI CJIS & NCIC 2000 Compliant
- AES 256 bit encryption

**For further information contact:**  
**voyagersales@atsva.com**  
**(877) 857-1100**