FAQ: WestTel Spectrum 911 Solution

Q. What is the WestTel Spectrum Platform?

A. The WestTel Spectrum Platform provides PSAPs a state-of-the-art NG9-1-1 ready, high-availability system. The Spectrum Platform complies with NENA NG9-1-1 specifications and ANSI standards and provides PSAPs with the ability to leverage existing technologies as well as a pathway for new and emerging technologies. The Spectrum Platform is the foundation for the WestTel Spectrum 9-1-1 solution.

Q. What is the WestTel Spectrum 9-1-1 Solution?

A. The WestTel Spectrum 9-1-1 solution consists of the Spectrum Platform with the WestTel VoIP 9-1-1 ANI/ALI Controller, integrated workstations with Spectrum 9-1-1 Phones and the Spectrum PSAP Toolkit, and Spectrum MIS reporting and metrics. Spectrum 9-1-1 is a cost effective 9-1-1 phone system that provides a path forward to NG9-1-1 call routing.

Q. What is an Integrated Workstation?

A. In most PSAPs, the telecommunicator has to simultaneously manage multiple monitors and keyboards for the 911 and CAD, and oftentimes Mapping and Radio functions. All the peripheral devices take up significant real estate on a telecommunicator's desk. WestTel's integrated workstation allows for the co-location of 911, CAD, and Mapping on one PC with a single keyboard and mouse that streamlines the process and frees up workspace for the telecommunicator.

Q. Is the WestTel Spectrum 9-1-1 Solution based on COTS Hardware and Software?

A. Yes - Spectrum 9-1-1 is built on common off the shelf (COTS) hardware. Spectrum 9-1-1 uses non-proprietary gateways, servers, switches, phones, and other readily available components to reduce costs and provide flexibility and extensibility as the 9-1-1 industry changes. The software components of Spectrum 9-1-1 are standards and open-source based as much as possible.

Q. I have an existing 911 system. Can I switch to the WestTel Spectrum 9-1-1 Solution with minimal disruptions?

A. Yes - You may need to upgrade workstation hardware to minimum specifications, and Spectrum 9-1-1 is very flexible and is designed to minimize transitional effects on a PSAP's operation. Our goal is to provide the full array of system features to meet the growing demands on the 9-1-1 community.

Q. Is WestTel more expensive than other competitive systems?

A. No, the WestTel Spectrum 9-1-1 Solution is very competitive because our solution is not hardware intensive. With the nature of the integrated workstation, co-locating the Spectrum 9-1-1 client application on existing workstations (i.e., CAD, Mapping), hardware costs are reduced while providing more efficient functionality. This capability makes it easier to install, configure, and maintain 9-1-1 positions and administrative stations, reducing the overall cost to the PSAP.

In addition, most other systems may require a costly cyclical upgrade which will render your present system obsolete. However, with WestTel's "bumper to bumper" 360° support and maintenance program, you will never need to pay for "cyclical upgrades" or future NG9-1-1 upgrades again. Your PSAP is covered - hardware, software, and labor costs.

Q. Can Spectrum 9-1-1 be maintained by an IT department?

A. There is no need for a dedicated IT professional at the PSAP. The WestTel system is designed to be managed and upgraded remotely. Many of our customers utilize part-time IT contractors that have minimal exposure to Spectrum 9-1- 1, helping manage IT costs.

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Q. Is the WestTel Spectrum Platform redundant and fault tolerant?

A. Yes. The Spectrum Platform provides the assurance of no system-downtime with a 5-nines (99.999%) reliability track record. Our system has a fully-redundant, continuously available, fault tolerant Stratus ftServer with lockstep processing.

Q. What kind of trunks and lines does WestTel handle?

A. The WestTel Solution is designed to handle CAMA, POTS/Analog, PRI, TI /EI circuits, as well as IP telephony - SIP messaging with RTP voice streams and MSRP multi-media streams.

Q. Can the WestTel Spectrum 9-1-1 Solution handle wireless calls, calls from the Internet, and text to 9-1-1 as well as landline calls?

A. Yes - Spectrum 9-1-1 can handle calls with all classes of service. 9-1-1 calls from all originating telecommunication networks, including Text to 9-1-1 calls.

Q. Is there a phone set at the telecommunicator integrated position and what kind of administrative sets can be added to the system?

A. Each PSAP can choose to have physical phone set such as the Polycom VVX600 or VVX400 at their desk. The Polycom phone sets can handle both Admin calls and 9-1-1 emergency calls simultaneously, so there is no need for separate admin and 9-1-1 phones.

Q. Can other applications run on the integrated workstation?

A. Yes. Applications within the WestTel suite are designed to coexist on the integrated workstation and third-party applications can be used alongside the Spectrum 9-1-1 solution.

Q. Is Spectrum 9-1-1 vulnerable to internet attacks?

A. No. In addition to employing firewalls and a privately-managed secure LAN, WestTel is one of the few companies in the public safety industry that abides by the international CIS-CAT (Center for Internet Security Configuration Assessment Tool) standards for technical control, hardening of operating systems, middleware and software applications, and network devices. The CIS-CAT Benchmarks are the only consensus-based, best-practice security configuration guides that are both developed and accepted by government, business, industry, and academia.

Q. Can multiple PSAPs be served from a single physical location?

A. Yes, Spectrum 9-1-1 is specifically engineered to support centralized and geographically-diverse PSAP models (equipment being housed at different locations) because we allow network components to be installed in a centralized PSAP model (all equipment under one roof) for multi-user or multi-agency capabilities. With core, common equipment installed at a central location (a Primary PSAP, a Communication Center or even the Central Office), a single data connection is all that is needed to deploy fully-functional remote WestTel integrated workstations. And, because we utilize VoIP as the protocol for the transmission of voice and data, we can deploy fully-functional remote positions in a very short time.

Q. Should IP phones (SIP) be used for E9-1-1 call processing?

A. Absolutely. Public safety systems are based on Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) standards which ensures voice and data functionality and a wide range of options for communicating with other SIP devices and networks. SIP telephones can be added anywhere on IP networks, providing for cost effective deployment of administrative phone extensions.

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