

# The fire brigade in Düsseldorf choose RapidReach for calling out crews in emergency situations

Since 1999 the Fire Department in Düsseldorf, Germany, have used the automated notification system RapidReach for calling out personnel in emergencies. This allows their control room staff to quickly and reliably notify emergency crews and specialists in a wide range of different situations, such as larger accidents, bomb and terrorist alerts and natural disasters. RapidReach has already been used more than 700 times for such purposes.

The fire brigade in Düsseldorf consists of 800 people in the professional force and 300 in the voluntary force. Their main assignments do not just involve fire fighting but also technical operations, rescue missions, ambulance services and civil protection. There are fire and rescue units all over Düsseldorf, plus a fire boat for extinguishing fires on the Rhine.

In 2001 the fire brigade had around 92 000 turn-outs. More than 6 000 of them concerned fires and technical operations. The majority, just below 86 000 turn-outs, were for rescue operations.

In view of the increasing number of assignments transmitted via phones and mobiles, the fire department decided to investigate automated notification systems. Such a system would allow them to quickly and automatically notify their own staff, external emergency teams, crisis teams, authorities and media.

The fire department knew exactly what type of system they wanted. For eight years they had been using a telephone alarm system, which was now out of date. They knew that they needed a system that would register every single detail in each call-out. Another condition was that it would have to be easy to operate.

Following a tendering process, RapidReach was chosen. After brief instructions the control room staff were soon able to perform call-outs. Today the system does not only save time, it also reduces stress in critical situations



and the staff can concentrate on other important tasks besides manual calling. The fact that every call is registered gives complete control over the entire call-out. In addition, all information can be generated as printed reports.

As the call-outs became more extensive and frequent, the fire department decided to extend the number of lines from four to eight. All eight lines are now

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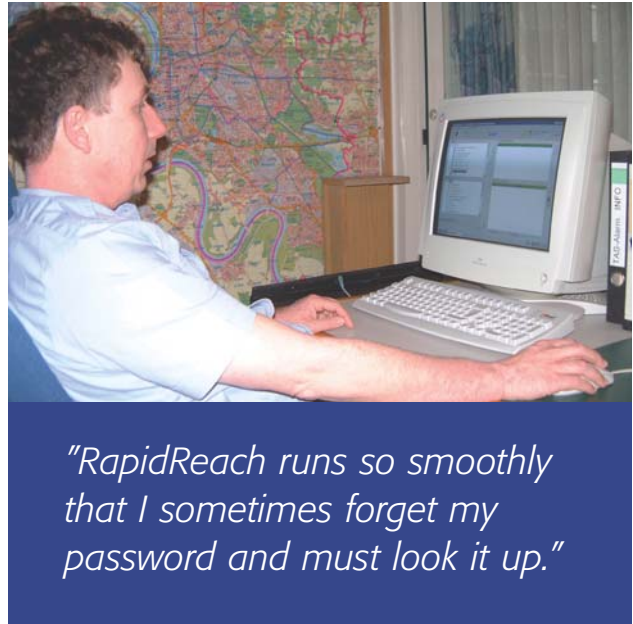
## Case Study

being used for recording messages and registering responses. According to those using the system, the reason it is so fast is not only because all lines are used simultaneously, but also due to the fact that the transmission of all information is automatic. Everybody gets the exact message and time consuming questioning and conversation is avoided.

RapidReach is often used in special situations that differ from the everyday activities. One example is an explosion in a train station in July 2000 when nine people were injured. The fire department quickly notified emergency teams via mobiles and telephones. "It all went completely problem-free, as it always does with RapidReach", says Siegfried Schneider, head of Data and Communication Technology at the Düsseldorf Fire Department. Examples of other such extraordinary emergencies are bomb alerts, larger fires and natural disasters such as storms and floods.

RapidReach is also used for daily operations when the department needs to call in crisis personnel, on-duty public health officials or technical experts.

Around 800 people are stored in the RapidReach data base. Among others there are on-duty emergency doctors, rescue teams, respiratory equipment staff, disinfection experts, fire boat staff, management groups and psychologists. These different groups have already been defined in RapidReach, which means that no one has to go through calling lists to find out who should be notified every time there is an emergency. All the



operator needs to do is assign the correct message to the concerned groups before starting the call-out. The messages can be recorded either at the time of the call-out or in advance. The fire department also uses so-called scenarios, which means that everything is prepared and ready at the time of an incident.

Thomas Hussmann, deputy head of Data and Communication Technology, says regarding the reliability of the system: "RapidReach runs so smoothly that I sometimes forget my password and must look it up."

*Enera – the developers of RapidReach – are leading suppliers of software tools for automated communications. With head quarters in Gothenburg, Sweden, Enera's products are marketed and supported in a number of countries worldwide, mainly in Europe and the United States. RapidReach is used as an emergency notification tool in communication centers, control rooms, and operation centres in a wide range of industries.*



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