



**HIGH-AVAILABILITY**

**RSF-1**



# Success Story



## The world never stops...



We often describe something as being 'a matter of life or death' when it rarely is the case. For Surrey Ambulance Service NHS Trust though, the adage certainly does hold true: lives absolutely depend on the speed, technology and medical skills of the service.

Almost 1.5 million inhabitants of Surrey and north- and mid-Hampshire, for instance. Or the one million extra people who travel on 100 miles of motorway through the area every day. To say nothing of the 30 million passengers travelling through Gatwick Airport each year who, however temporarily and unwittingly, also rely on the Service's swift response and life-saving capabilities.

Since the team answered a massive 76,000 emergency calls in the year ending March 2000 a third from patients with life-threatening conditions involving a collapse or a serious car accident it's safe to say that maintaining Surrey's ambulance service truly is a matter of life or death.

Of course there's more to the service than responding to emergency calls too. One of 37 self-governing ambulance services in the UK, SAS has 550 staff, over 100 vehicles, 19 ambulance stations serving an area covering 700 square miles and a budget of £18m to manage. It's acclaimed as one of the fastest responding ambulance services in the South East of England and boasts a Patient Transport Service and Commercial Services Department at the leading edge of the ambulance service industry.

Surrey Ambulance Service (SAS) NHS Trust is a dynamic and forward-looking organisation, which constantly strives to improve the quality of care its patients receive. Its five-year strategic direction entitled "The Bridge of Care" is particularly ground-breaking and seeks to re-focus the provision of ambulance services on the clinical need of the patient rather than that which centres on providing a fully-equipped ambulance for every 999 call, regardless of patient need. The emergency demand on the service has increased by 55% over the last five years and is predicted to double again over the next 10 years. In fact SAS is facing the highest level of growth for any urban ambulance service in the whole of the country.

Determined to meet that demand head on, the Service has already implemented innovative measures. In the past year, brand new, more efficient emergency ambulances have been introduced to the fleet, a motorcycle paramedic scheme has been introduced and the Emergency Dispatch Centre (the nerve centre of the Service which answers all 999 ambulance calls, allocates and dispatches them) has been refurbished and equipped with £1 million of technology.

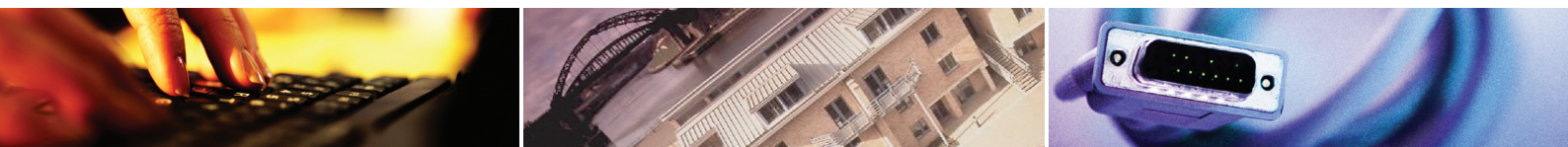
That IT system is clearly critical, to efficiency, logistics and lives. Downtime and loss of application use would be unthinkable.

Little surprise then that IT Manager Eldon McArthur specified High-Availability.Com's RSF-1 software to protect the Emergency Dispatch Centre's system and ensure the control centre functions, even if one of the computers were to fail. Designed especially for environments in which failure of systems could be potentially catastrophic, RSF-1 provides 100% uptime, 7-days a week, 24-hours a day. And that includes continual provision of the firewall.



# “RSF-1 does exactly what it’s supposed to do”

Eldon McArthur



RSF-1 had been recommended by the Mersey Regional Ambulance NHS Trust and Eldon had been to see the product in action there. He had no hesitation in including it in his own specification, though Surrey’s configuration was slightly different.

For resilience purposes, Eldon wanted the two Sun servers to be 30 metres apart, and so a differential SCSI connection was used instead of the standard fibre link. The two have twin cabling and network cards and are also hooked up by Ethernet for extra security. RSF-1 checks continuously seconds to make sure that the servers are both operating. Should one fail, it will automatically switch to the other server, ensuring that the Control and Command database is back up and running within a matter of minutes.

According to Eldon, the new system with RSF-1 is an excellent alternative to the standard fibre cluster set up. “For an NHS Trust with a limited budget, that would not have been feasible. This way, we’ve got a system which will pay for itself within three years and it’s actually more cost-effective than the system we had previously too.” explains Eldon.

So far, Eldon and his team have not had to test RSF-1’s capabilities in a ‘real-life’ situation, but exhaustive pre-installation testing was obviously carried out. “RSF-1 gives us resilience in the event of a primary system or processor failure” says Eldon, adding “and High-Availability.Com’s technical team proved their worth too. Sometime ago we had a small hardware component failure and were struggling to pinpoint the problem. High-Availability.Com immediately despatched chief technical guru Giles Gamon who joined our investigative team until the difficulty was resolved even though testing went on until 3 a.m. in the morning.”

Eldon is confident that High-Availability.Com and RSF-1 are meeting the needs of the Surrey Ambulance Service NHS Trust and the public it serves. “RSF-1 does exactly what it’s supposed to do” he says, “and that’s great news for everyone. As for the High-Availability team, they provide an excellent service and the people have a great attitude. We couldn’t ask for more.”



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