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Friday, March 11, 2011

N.J. Hospital Installs Gateway to Help to Reduce Curb-to-Balloon Time

Mar 8, 2011 12:55 PM

By Mary Rose Roberts

New Jersey–based Saint Clare's Health System, a member of the century-old Catholic Health Initiatives, installed In Motion Technology's onBoard Mobile Gateway networking solution into its fleet dispatching and communications systems. The gateway turns Saint Clare's ambulances into mobile wireless hotspots, supporting the transmission of patient and vehicle data to emergency rooms and ambulance dispatchers.

With the help of a Verizon air card, the gateway connects the ambulance and the local hospital so emergency rooms can prepare for incoming patients, said Dean Snook, communications supervisor of St. Clare's regional ambulance authority. Data in the hands of ER physicians prior to a patient's arrival saves lives, Snook said. In addition, dispatchers benefit from vehicle information — such as location — so they can manage their ambulance fleet "and get the closest paramedic ambulance to the emergency," he said.

Now, St. Clare ambulances are equipped to transmit EKG readings and other patient information so fixed doctors can director mobile medics on how to initiate care. It also lets ER doctors prepare procedures before a patient's arrival, such as preparing to administer a catheterization immediately upon a heart patient — increasing in life expectancy, said Snook.

"We can send data en route to the hospital right to a cardiologist and emergency-room physician," he said. "They do an immediate activation so the patient is ready to go right to the catheterization lab, reducing the curb-to-balloon time."

The ambulance authority spent approximately $50,000 to purchase software and hardware, as well as antennas and mounting features, to turn 16 ambulances into wireless hotspots. Snook said it also costs $50 per vehicle, per month, for an unlimited data plan.

"You also have to have part of your budget dedicated to maintenance for tech support and troubleshooting," he added.

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