



# EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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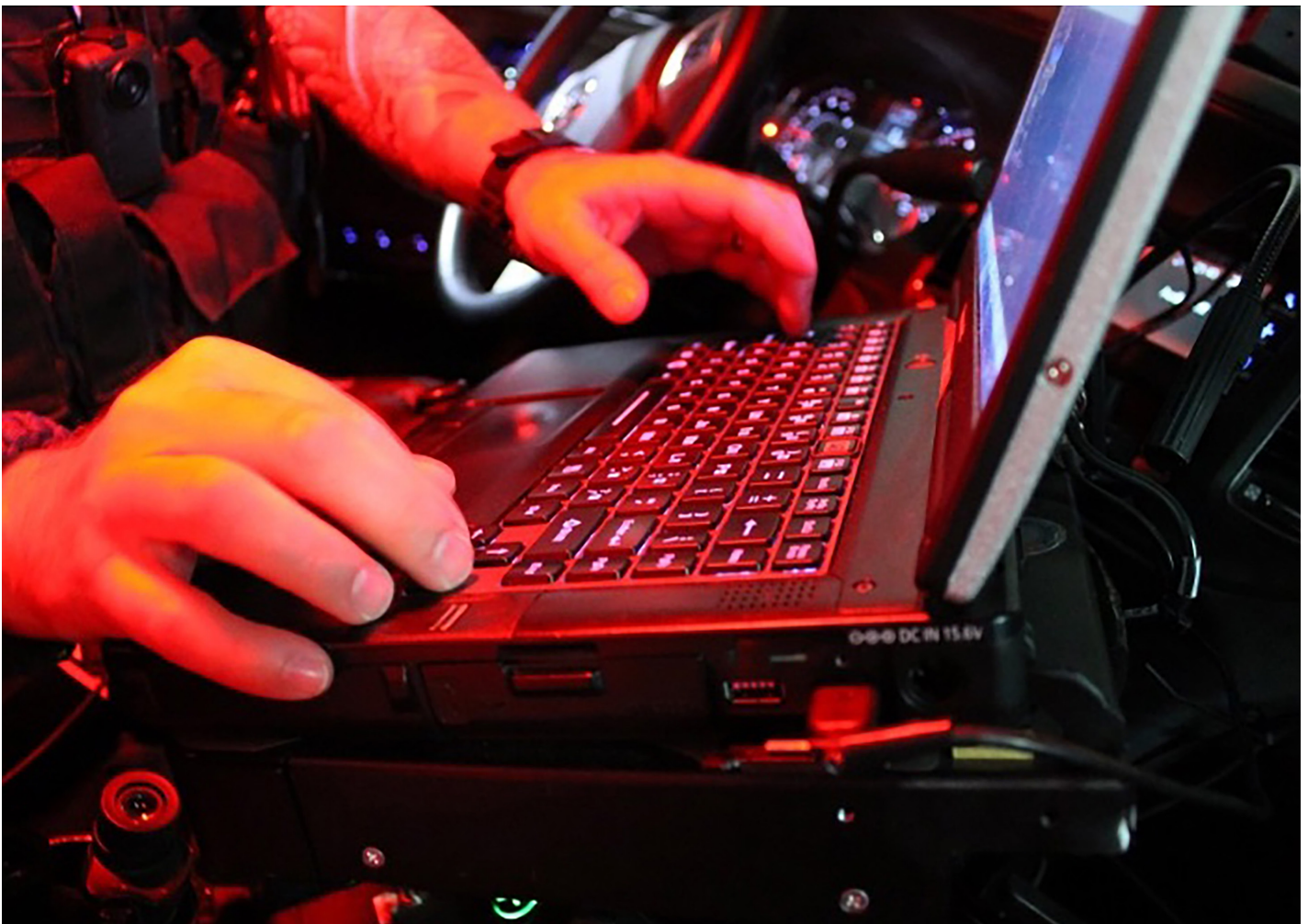
PUBLIC SAFETY & HOMELAND SECURITY

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## Speech-Recognition Software Writes Officers' Reports for Them

*The San Bernardino Police Department has deployed Dragon speech-recognition software that lets officers and detectives speak into a microphone that translates that language into a report, recognizing department codes.*

**BY JIM MCKAY** / NOVEMBER 1, 2019



For police officers on patrol, filling out paperwork on a mobile data terminal (MDT) in a patrol car is a necessary part of their jobs. But it's tedious, time-consuming and can be hazardous.

That's changing for some officers, who can use speech recognition software in the patrol vehicle that allows them to avoid typing and just recite the report. Doing that gives the officer more situational awareness and allows for more detail in the report. It also saves time.

The San Bernardino Police Department deployed Dragon Law Enforcement software by Nuance Communications five months ago for its officers and detectives. The big selling point for Capt. Paul Williams, who headed the deployment, was safety.

"If you're a graveyard officer and you have reports, you usually have to find a big, open parking lot that's well lit, and you park," Williams said. "If you're typing, you're not looking at your surroundings, your head is coming up every 20 to 30 seconds."

The problems with that scenario are two-fold. No. 1, the officer's situational awareness is compromised when he or she is looking down at the MDT to type. No. 2, the report isn't as comprehensive as it could be.

Williams said his officers are averaging 118 words per minute. That's obviously far more words than a good typist can type.

"You're describing the scene so that a person in the jury box or a lawyer can visualize it," Williams said. "My detectives are getting very descriptive, either with the homicide scene or other, so ultimately it's not about doing the report faster, it's a high-quality report so that when it goes to the district attorney's office, they have something to work with."

Also, some cases may not go to trial for a year or more and if the officer's report contains more detail, that allows him or her to recall what happened more accurately. "You can write a line or two, but you leave yourself open to cross-examination and reasonable doubt," Williams said.

"We've built a product, a push-to-talk, that comes with what we call a Nuance Power Mic, which is a noise cancelling push-to-talk microphone that you just push and you can dictate your reports," said Mark Geremia, vice president and general manager of Dragon Professional and Consumer for Nuance Communications. "You can have complete command and control over your computer or just your records management system."

The patrol officers mostly do their reports in the vehicle on the MDT, while the detectives, who don't have MDTs in their cars, do their reports at the station on their computers. The key is the Power Mic that each officer and detective is issued. It can be used in either location, and each officer can "individualize" it.

For instance, each scenario that occurs on patrol requires a “pre-scripted paragraph” a sort of introduction to what the report is about. Each officer or detective can customize that paragraph.

The software also comes tailored to the agency’s needs. In California, the codes police use differ from most agencies in other states and the power mic “understands” what those codes are and can translate them.

In the past, if an officer was driving and spotted a vehicle that was suspicious for some reason, he’d have to type in the license plate, which may require him to look down at the MDT. Now he can say the phonetics into the power mic, and it will do the rest.

“All he has to do is push a button and say, ‘Run plate,’ and it changes the system into the phonetics, so he can say ‘Adam, Baker, Charlie, one, two, three, press send,’ so his eyes are watching the car the entire time,” Williams said.

“That’s situational awareness,” Geremia said. “It’s sad to hear, but there’s a lot of things that happen on the street and they’re our first line.”