

SUCCESS STORY

CASS COUNTY

Industry: **Municipal**

Solution: **Symphia NowForce**

Region: **North America**

Results: **Rapid emergency response,
improved field communication**



About Cass County

Cass County, Iowa, spans 565 square miles, predominantly rural, marked by vast stretches of agricultural land. It has approximately 24 miles of interstate running through its northern part, allowing easier access to distant areas of the county. As of the 2020 census, Cass County is home to a population of 13,127. The county encompasses several towns, including Anita, Lewis, Griswold, Marne, Cumberland, Massena, Lyman, and Wiota, each contributing to the county's rural charm. The vast network of gravel and hard surface roads reflects its practical yet pastoral nature, winding through endless fields of corn and beans. Cass County is not only known for its crops but also for its significant contributions to the beef and pork industries.

Cass County's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are mainly volunteer-operated, but unfortunately, the number of volunteers has declined. A full-time ambulance service is run by a private entity and based in Atlantic, which is the county seat of Cass County. This service provides Advanced Life Support for the city of Atlantic and multiple volunteer entities that typically only provide Basic Life Support. Before 2021, Iowa did not classify EMS as an essential service like Law Enforcement and Fire. However, legislation passed in 2021 now permits all 99 counties' Boards of Supervisors to declare EMS essential, a critical objective for Cass County. Unfortunately, statewide, timely access to an ambulance is not always assured; it may take 35 to 45 minutes for help to arrive from a neighboring county. In medical emergencies, where "time is life," this delay can be critical.

Opportunity

The State of Iowa's implementation of the Iowa United First Aid (IUFA) program gave Cass County the opportunity to address the critical gaps in its emergency response infrastructure. Developed by Lieutenant Governor Adam Gregg, IUFA aims to bridge crucial gaps in emergency services. IUFA is not EMS; it does not replace the need to call 911 in a medical emergency or the need for an ambulance. The program trains local volunteers in CPR/AED, basic first aid, and hemorrhage control techniques such as "Stop the Bleed." These volunteers have a GO-bag containing essential emergency supplies, including a basic first aid kit, a comprehensive hemorrhage control kit with a tourniquet, Naloxone (Narcan), and a Lifepak CR-2 AED. Cass County was selected as one of the three pilot host sites for this program, giving it an opportunity to address the urgent need for a solution that could minimize the response time between a 9-1-1 call and the arrival of emergency medical services. With the absence of a robust dispatch system and prolonged wait times for emergency services, residents' lives and well-being remained at risk.

Solution

Symphia NowForce was selected as the solution that could positively impact Cass County's emergency services. Symphia NowForce is a state-of-the-art dispatch and response platform that provides unparalleled situational awareness by seamlessly integrating real-time data. Designed for first responders, security personnel, and third-party resources, NowForce is purpose-built to deliver efficient and timely responses to potential threats and active incidents. By integrating GPS

technology into the dispatch system, NowForce allows for the swift identification and deployment of the three closest first aid volunteers within a 15-minute radius of the location. This feature bridges the gap between the emergency call and response time, enhancing the chance of survival in life-threatening situations. NowForce also facilitates seamless communication between Cass County responders, dispatchers, and stakeholders, ensuring timely and efficient response efforts.

Results

With the implementation of Ssymphia NowForce, instances have been reported where first aid volunteers arrived on the scene more than 10 minutes before EMS/ambulance units arrived. This vast improvement in response time further demonstrates the effectiveness of the NowForce system in optimizing resource allocation and improving overall response efficiency. The turn-by-turn directions, SOS features, and real-time GPS location tracking features have further enhanced Cass County's emergency response infrastructure, setting a precedent for improved operational effectiveness and public safety.

“Volunteer response times in areas such as the city of Atlantic have been significantly reduced to approximately 3 minutes from the time of the 9-1-1 call,” said Erik Johnson, the Cass County First Aid Program Coordinator. “This expedited response time ensures compliance with requirements and enhances collaboration between law enforcement, ambulance services, and fire departments.”

A recent occurrence in Cass County demonstrates the life-saving potential of the NowForce system. Cass County received a 911 call that involved an unresponsive individual who had suffered a fall in Wiota, a town located approximately 8 miles

east of Atlantic. Wiota is one of the cities in Cass County that relies solely on fire services and has limited EMS volunteers. In this particular scenario, an EMS volunteer was just 150 yards away. When they received the notification from NowForce, they were able to respond in 48 seconds with a GO-bag and AED in hand. The individual could not breathe adequately due to his positioning, and the EMS volunteer quickly administered aid and repositioned him, which stabilized his condition; he became responsive and alert. After providing initial aid, we waited an additional 12 minutes for two ambulances to arrive—one from Atlantic and another volunteer service from Anita, each 8 miles away. This incident highlights the critical role of Cass County's IUFA and the NowForce system's GPS feature, which enabled the EMS volunteer to act swiftly in a life-threatening situation.



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