



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Northwest Fire Rescue District Improves Emergency Response Using FirstWatch Real-Time Situational Awareness System**

Encinitas, Calif. – June 6, 2012 – Emergency response in Pima County, Ariz. improved significantly since the Northwest Fire Rescue District deployed FirstWatch Real-Time Situational Awareness System, which allows for close monitoring of each step in 911 call processing and fire/emergency medical services response.

A few years ago, Northwest Fire Rescue District, which serves a population of about 110,000 in Marana, Ariz. and in unincorporated areas outside of Tucson, was seeking reaccreditation from the Center for Public Safety Excellence. To be accredited, fire and EMS agencies have to meet rigorous standards in multiple areas of performance.

The fire rescue district faced several hurdles: 911 call processing times were not meeting national standards. In addition, fire district officials saw room for improvement in firefighter response, including how fast they were getting geared up and leaving the station and how quickly they were initiating treatment on scene, especially in life and death situations such as cardiac arrest, in which the heart suddenly stops beating and death occurs within minutes without cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

To address those issues, the fire district applied for and received a \$50,000 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (FIRE Act) from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to deploy FirstWatch, an Internet-based real-time data monitoring and surveillance system that could be integrated with the district's Fire Records System. (The grant covered 80 percent of the cost; the district covered 20 percent.)

Phase one of Northwest Fire's operations quality improvement initiative began in September 2011. According to national standards, ambulances should be dispatched within 60 seconds of a call coming in to a 911 communications center, in 90 percent of cases. However, the emergency dispatch center the district contracts with was meeting that standard only 17 percent of the time.

Using FirstWatch, Northwest Fire District officials began monitoring each call in near real-time to determine precisely how long it took to dispatch a fire truck, and acted quickly when calls took too long. The result: dispatchers are now meeting the standard more than 50 percent of the time, and trending upward. "We needed something that was in real-time, so we could react to trends and make decisions when it would make a difference," says Northwest Fire Rescue District Communications Coordinator Jim Long. "FirstWatch helped us tremendously, and was also instrumental in helping us get reaccredited in January. It's a good watchdog that shows us at any given moment exactly what's happening in the communications center and to what extent we're making a difference in improving patient outcomes," Long says.

Phase two of the quality improvement initiative involved using FirstWatch to closely monitor all aspects of firefighters' performance. That included measuring how long it took them to leave the station after being dispatched to an emergency; how long it took to arrive on scene; and how long it took to get the fire truck back into service so that it was ready to answer another call, a sign of operational efficiency.

Phase three, which is ongoing, involves using FirstWatch to mine electronic patient care reports, seeking out areas for improvement. One such measurement is how long it takes firefighters to use a 12-lead EKG, which diagnoses STEMI (ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction), the most serious type of heart attack. Diagnosing STEMI before the patient arrives at the hospital enables hospital staff to be ready to deliver prompt treatment upon arrival. Other measurements include whether a bystander started CPR in cases of cardiac arrest, whether an automated external defibrillator (AED) was used, and whether firefighters started hypothermia in the field, believed to be key contributors to whether or not patients survive.

"The implementation of the First Watch system has allowed those who take the emergency call for help and those who respond to the incident the power to visualize the impacts that time has on the responses, when measured to performance standards," says Northwest Fire Rescue District Chief Jeff Piechura. "This empowerment through the use of information has reduced call processing and turnout times, which has resulted in shortening the time between the initial call for help, and the responders arriving at the front door to provide it."

Todd Stout, FirstWatch founder and president, says he looks forward to continuing to work closely with Northwest Fire Rescue District to develop solutions to meet response time and performance goals. "We are proud to welcome Northwest Fire Rescue District as our first customer in Arizona," Stout says.

#### **About FirstWatch:**

FirstWatch, an Encinitas-Calif.-based company, began monitoring 911 data in Kansas City, Mo. in 1999. Since then, FirstWatch has grown into a global leader in real-time public safety data analysis, one that's utilized by police, fire, emergency medical services and public health organizations in 35 states and provinces across the United States and Canada.

FirstWatch's Real-Time Situational Awareness System enables public safety organizations to monitor what's happening in their system as events are unfolding, enabling quick action and response. FirstWatch's custom software solution can be used to enhance situational awareness to protect the health and safety of emergency responders; to detect and alert public health and safety organizations to pandemic disease or bioterrorism; and to enable public safety agencies to monitor operational performance to ensure the efficient and responsible use of resources.

FirstWatch's customer-oriented team of software engineers and data analysis experts—many of whom come to the job with extensive field experience—also offer custom report development and custom alerts, or "triggers," designed to help organizations meet specific local or regional goals.

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